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Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government

# School Effectiveness Framework

Building effective learning communities together



# School Effectiveness Framework

- Audience** Schools, local authorities, Welsh Assembly Government, unions, professional and national bodies and other stakeholders involved with children and young people's learning and wellbeing.
- Overview** The School Effectiveness Framework has been developed by the Welsh Assembly Government in collaboration with key stakeholders. It sets out the vision and an implementation schedule for putting school effectiveness based on tri-level reform into action. Tri-level reform is the whole of the education community (schools, local authorities and the Assembly Government) working collaboratively and in alignment. The Framework describes the key characteristics required to build on existing good practice and improve children's and young people's learning and wellbeing throughout Wales, and each partner's contribution to securing that.
- Action required** Collaborative working to bring about tri-level reform as outlined in this Framework.
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[www.wales.gov.uk](http://www.wales.gov.uk)
- Related documents** Welsh Assembly Government, (2006). The Learning Country: Vision into Action

# School Effectiveness Framework

## Building Effective Learning Communities Together

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## The Context

The *Learning Country: Vision Into Action*<sup>1</sup> published in 2006 acknowledges that there is a body of well established and internationally recognised knowledge relating to school effectiveness and improvement. The international evidence emerges from over 50 countries and is firmly based on the principles of equity and quality. This School Effectiveness Framework represents the commitment of the Welsh Assembly Government and local authorities to apply this knowledge in the particular circumstances of Wales, as a major part of our drive towards improving outcomes for children and young people.

The outcomes of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2006<sup>2</sup> provide an international benchmark for the performance of our school system in Wales. The PISA results confirm that we have made progress across the board in children and young people's achievement. However, in relation to the age, ability, gender and socio-economic circumstances of our children and young people, this progress is uneven and needs to be advanced further. The Framework supports our response to PISA 2006 as part of our drive to ensure that high quality outcomes and equity of performance are firmly secured in all our schools.

The Welsh Assembly Government and its local authority partners believe that throughout their lifetime everyone can learn, and develop and reach their full potential, given suitable support, encouragement and conditions for learning.

The Welsh Assembly Government's policies for children and young people have their basis in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>3</sup>, which includes the right to have a comprehensive range of educational and learning opportunities. This rights-based approach is set out in *Children and Young People: Rights into Action* (2004)<sup>4</sup>. This strategy brings together children's rights under seven core aims that now make up the statutory definition for the wellbeing of children and young people in Wales. Core aim 2 states that children and young people have the right to education, training and work experience - tailored to meet their needs; basic skills which open doors to a full life and promote social inclusion; and independent, specialist careers advice and guidance, student support and counselling services. The Assembly Government, its local authority partners and schools themselves are committed to the provision of high quality school education for all children and young people. Provision that enables them to access their entitlements so as to participate fully in learning and in the life of their communities.

Maximising individuals' learning enriches their lives, extends their opportunities, and has significant benefits for their family, the wider community in which they live and the economic prosperity of Wales.

Education outcomes do not just depend on schools. They are influenced by a range of factors including poverty, family circumstances, housing and health.

Poverty currently affects one in four children and young people in Wales. Research has long shown that social disadvantage is the single biggest obstacle to achievement in education. In Wales, we have a range of innovative and effective education policies that are intended to address this link between poverty and underachievement but the challenge is to integrate these strategies to maximise their impact. If schools are to deliver effectively for children and young people they need to work with other schools, parents, the local community, statutory partners and voluntary organisations.

Schools are essential partners with other service providers in working together to meet the needs of children and young people, as required by the Children Act 2004<sup>5</sup>. The Act places duties on local authorities, schools, and a range of other partners, to co-operate to improve the wellbeing of children and young people. As part of this work, local authorities are required from September 2008 to publish a Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP).

The Assembly Government's programme *Making the Connections*<sup>6</sup> similarly requires collaboration across services, with a clear focus on the citizen, to deliver holistic outcomes. Collaborative working across services within and between local authorities builds capacity to find shared solutions to challenges. This is particularly important in achieving greater equity of performance and in breaking the link between disadvantage and poor learning outcomes. The School Effectiveness Framework therefore has a major role to play in achieving the Welsh Assembly Government's objective of eliminating child poverty by 2020.

Since 2003 schools have been engaged in a process of change arising from the National Agreement on Raising Standards and Tackling Workload; implementing a wide range of remodelling strategies designed to make best use of their resources and enable teachers to focus on the core activities of teaching and learning. This has involved significant cultural change and led to new ways of working for the school workforce. Schools' remodelling strategies provide the means by which schools can target resources at raising standards and also help to secure the conditions needed for a school to be effective.

## **The Need for Improved School Effectiveness**

Many children and young people in Wales achieve well and, at the end of key stages 1 and 2, their attainments compare with their counterparts in other countries. In the case of schools that add the most value, these children and young people continue to achieve well. However, we need to do more to reduce the differences in outcomes, within schools (where the greatest variation lies), between schools, between local authorities and between the primary and secondary phases of education; and to raise overall levels of attainment. The fact that we can identify significant variation in performance between schools which have children and young people of similar ability and with similar backgrounds, demonstrates that children and young people in Wales are not currently offered an equal opportunity to fulfil their potential.

This knowledge underpins the moral purpose for our education system and requires that we create the conditions that provide **all** children and young people with the best possible opportunities to learn, maximise their potential, and to reap the benefits. This is a matter of social justice and equity. It is also about collective responsibility. We need to be just as concerned about the progress of children and young people in other settings as those in our own. Our moral purpose has to be “how we improve learning outcomes for all students in all settings rather than some students in some settings.” (Harris 2007)<sup>7</sup>.

Continuing to improve the outcomes for learners in Wales remains a key priority for the Welsh Assembly Government. *The Learning Country: Vision into Action* makes clear that we want to build on existing knowledge about what makes effective learning settings so as to develop and improve further our education system. *One Wales*<sup>8</sup>, the progressive agenda for the Government of Wales, commits the Assembly Government to giving the children and young people of Wales a first-class education and to working with education providers, practitioners and parents to create the best possible schools for the future. This requires innovative thinking and practice at all levels.

This School Effectiveness Framework is the vehicle for taking forward these commitments, by aligning policies and their implementation to secure better outcomes.

## Tri-level Working

Evidence shows that educational reform is most effective when designed and implemented collaboratively and coherently through all levels of the system: nationally, locally and at the level of the individual learning setting - a process of tri-level reform. Wales has a strong tradition of working co-operatively in education and we want to use this strength as the foundation upon which to build and implement the School Effectiveness Framework. A tri-level endeavour enables us to draw on the knowledge and experience of teaching practitioners and leaders; and to engage the capacity of local authorities, the Assembly Government and schools in support of children and young people's learning.

Evidence also shows that children and young people learn most effectively when they are involved in decisions about their learning. The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to ensuring that all children and young people are involved in decision-making on issues that affect them. It is therefore our intention that use of the Framework should involve children and young people as active participants in improving school effectiveness.

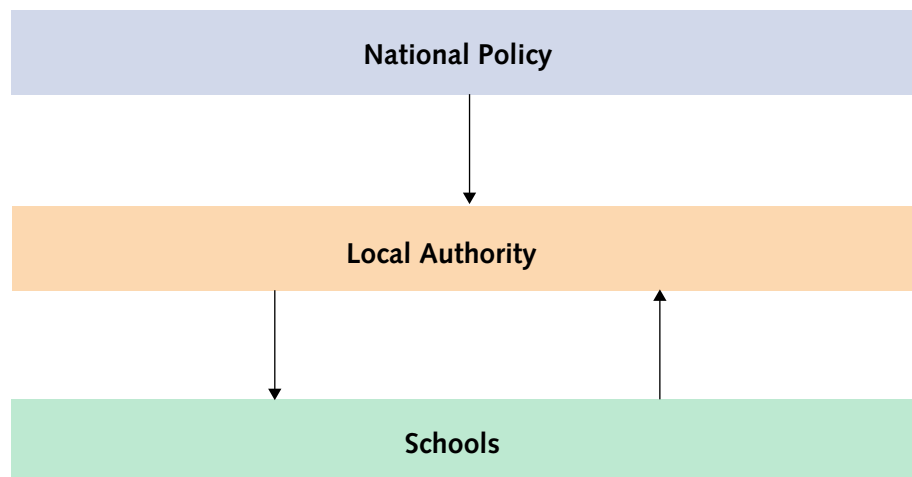
The School Effectiveness Framework is designed to bring together existing programmes of action directed at school improvement. It will build on the work schools are already doing through their remodelling strategies to manage change better, deploy resources and respond to the needs of children and young people. Any future programmes promoted by the Welsh Assembly Government and its

partners will be designed to fit within and be consistent with the Framework. It is intended to deliver a coherent approach tailored to the Welsh context and aligned to the challenges faced by schools in Wales. The intention is that it should be applied systematically across Wales but in a way that reflects the circumstances and needs of individual schools.

## The Importance of Systems Thinking

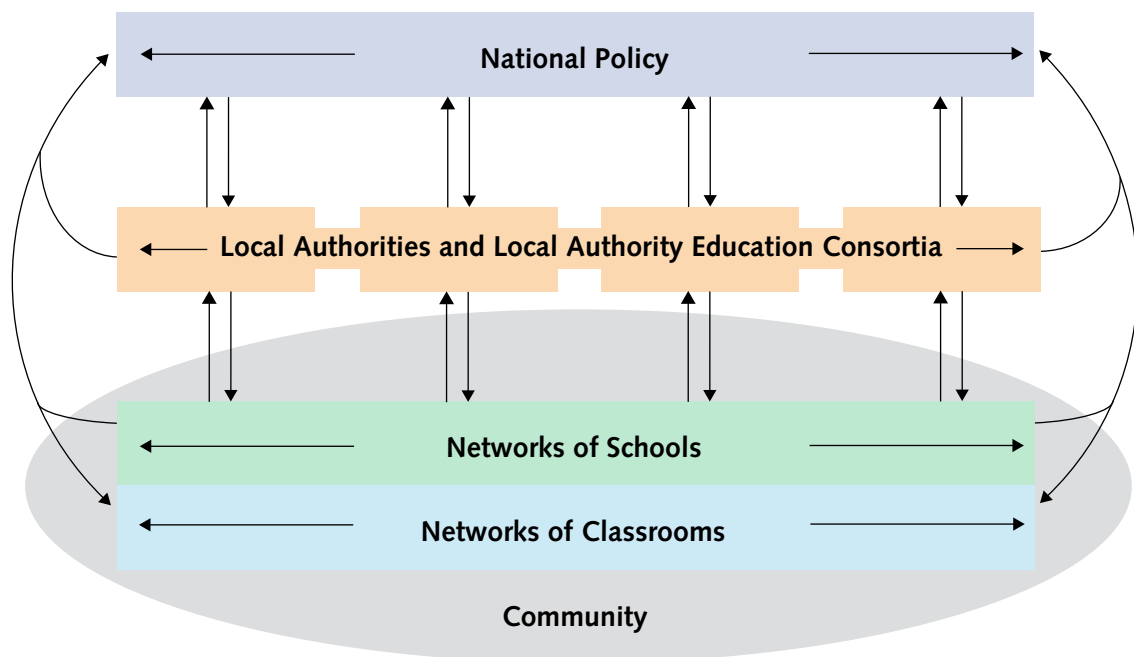
Schools do not exist in isolation. They operate within a local context (with its own history and complexities) that is constantly changing. The people within a school community - and the way they interact with one another - are the most important factor in the way the school works. However, it is vital that schools are viewed not just as systems within themselves, but as part of the wider educational system of Wales. Successful tri-level reform requires systems thinking.

Traditionally, schools have operated within a structure where central government has developed policy directions that local authorities have been responsible for passing on to, and monitoring with, schools. A compliance model of inspection and funding ensured that schools implemented national policy, but it did not enable schools to have ownership or, necessarily, the flexibility to address local circumstances.



Systems thinking to effect tri-level reform, as advocated by Professor Michael Fullan<sup>9</sup>, requires a different kind of flow of communication and policy development. It requires the focus at all levels, and throughout all the organisations that work to improve outcomes for children and young people as learners, to remain on what happens in the classroom. It aligns resources to ensure that practitioners are able to support individual learner needs. It advocates that schools work in cluster groups or families of schools. Most importantly, it needs capacity to be built at all levels and collaboration to be the natural way that people at all levels operate.





This School Effectiveness Framework seeks to describe the most important elements within our education system, as they operate at each level and ultimately affect the learning outcomes and wellbeing of children and young people. Any change planned and implemented within any one of these elements may have consequences - intended or otherwise - for each of the other elements.

Thinking systemically about the range of activities affecting schools is therefore paramount to any plans for improvement. These plans could include:

- aligning resources with priorities;
- ensuring sufficient time is allocated to achieve the improvements sought; and
- ensuring that the environment is conducive to learning and allows for personalised approaches to teaching.

## A Framework for Improvement and Effectiveness

We know that school effectiveness requires an ethos where children and young people are expected to succeed and achieve a personal standard of excellence. The ethos needs to reflect the values inherent in Wales, including the importance of the Welsh language within the context of a bilingual country with its unique culture and traditions. It needs to provide the right support to ensure all children and young people have equal opportunities to succeed. To achieve this, schools need to work both in developing their own and interdependent approaches to effectiveness, so as to capture existing good practice and knowledge and ensure that new solutions are found for old and emerging challenges. This will put Wales in the strongest possible position to maximise future opportunities and support the creation of a high performance culture.

## A National Purpose for Schools

As part of the Framework, the Welsh Assembly Government and its partners (including representatives of local authorities and head teachers) have developed a statement of national purpose for schools. It describes the purpose of schools as being to:

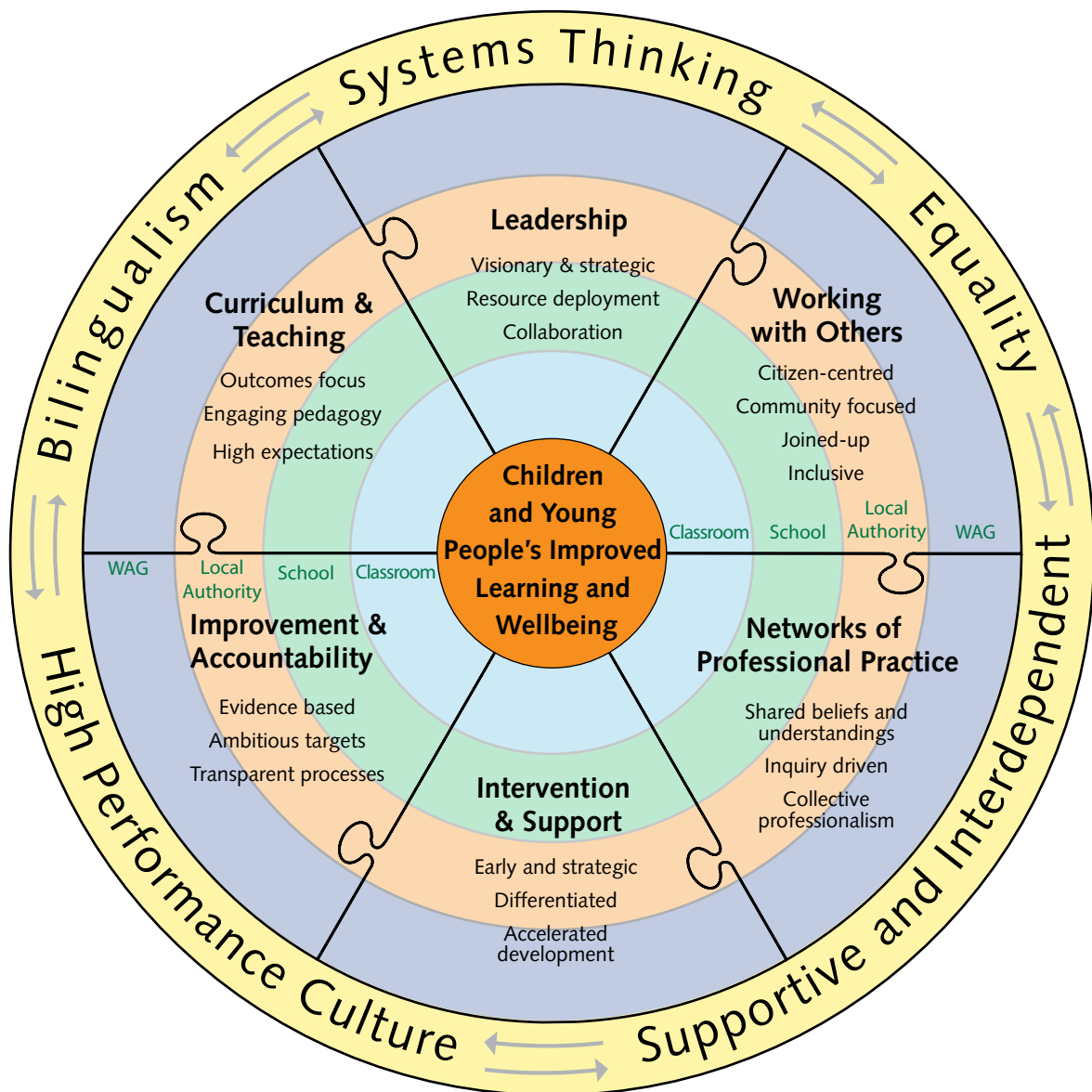
- enable all children and young people to develop their full potential by acquiring skills, knowledge, understanding and attitudes, including personal, social and emotional skills, to enable them to become economically, socially and personally active citizens and lifelong learners;
- promote a culture of social inclusion and respect for diversity, particularly through developing the wellbeing of learners and personalising their learning;
- establish strong professional learning communities in schools where practitioners can develop and share their professional knowledge on learning and teaching;
- offer children and young people a curriculum that engages and motivates them to learn and to achieve their potential;
- provide a learning community for all engaged in school life, with children and young people and their families at the centre, and including governors, teachers, other school staff and adults training to work in schools;
- be a key player with other schools and partner service providers in planning and delivering integrated services for children and young people to improve their well-being; and
- provide or facilitate education so that schools contribute to meeting the needs of the community and engage the community as partners to ensure that all schools are community focussed.

The School Effectiveness Framework seeks to draw together the range of programmes which address the challenges facing schools in achieving the national purpose. It contributes to the fulfilment of the new duties on local authorities and

their partners to develop integrated services through their Children and Young People's Plans (CYPPs). In time it is intended to sit alongside similar frameworks for other education settings.

## The School Effectiveness Framework

Sustainable improvement is not achieved through piecemeal change. Real and lasting improvement occurs when the elements identified as instrumental in achieving the desired improvement are addressed simultaneously, and in such a way that they complement and support one another. The following diagram outlines interdependent areas of activity that need to be addressed if improvement for children and young people is to happen in and through schools.



Welsh Assembly Government



Local Authority



School



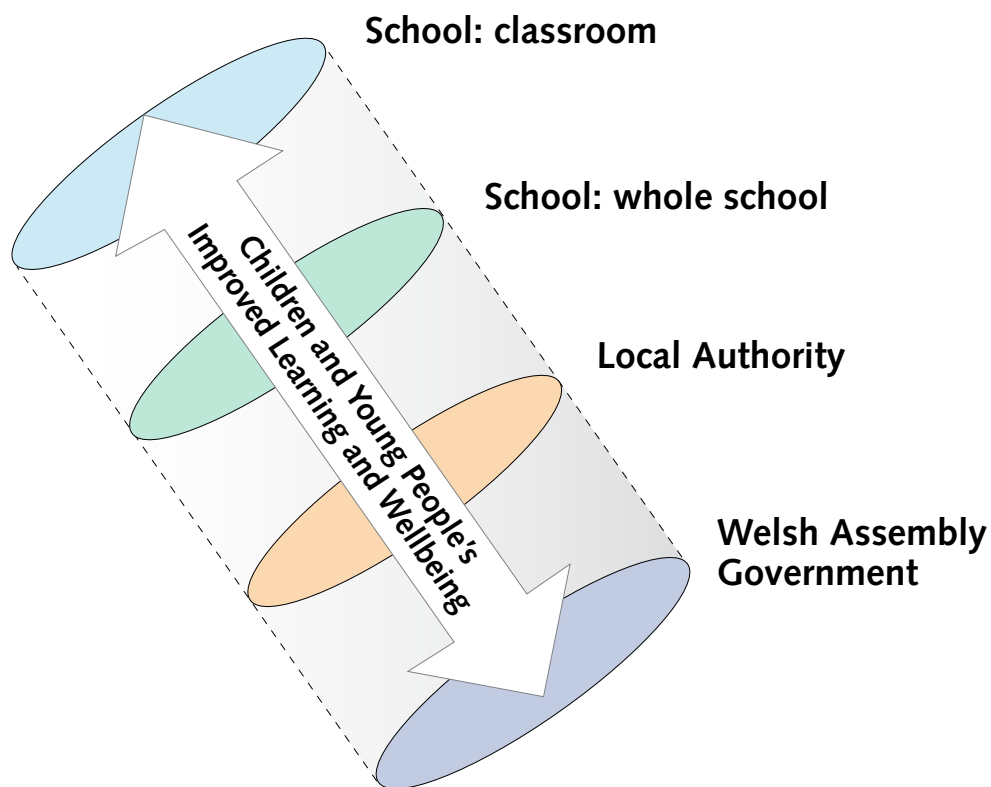
Classroom



The Framework illustrated above applies to schools: across classroom and whole school, local authority and Assembly Government levels. To be effective, it requires each of the levels to work together and align their efforts within the same framework. For all the levels there needs to be a clear 'line of sight' to the desired outcome of improved learning and learner wellbeing. The Framework identifies at each level, the actions to be undertaken to achieve the desired outcome.

Each element (leadership; working with others; networks of professional practice; intervention and support; improvement and accountability; and curriculum and teaching), when implemented in an integrated way, contributes to improvement. Current and planned programmes are placed within the Framework, so activities are aligned to serve a common goal and to ensure overall alignment to school effectiveness.

## The Levels



The School Effectiveness Framework requires the development of professional learning communities at school, local authority and national levels to build collaborative capacity and engage leaders and practitioners at all levels in meaningful professional debate and learning. The focus of these professional learning communities has to be on the following:

**Classroom:** Practitioners plan for learning at an individual level, utilising relevant and meaningful curricula, pedagogy and quality assessment. They deploy resources - for example, other adults and support services, curriculum materials, appropriate engagement time - to enable children and young people to engage and learn in a reflective environment of high expectations and support.

**School:** Improves the focus on children and young people's needs by allocating resources to priority activities and by the deployment and professional development of staff. School structures, including timetables and staff meeting times support the outcomes sought by improving the learning environment; and facilitate working with others. All schools in Wales are now required to have in place effective school councils. These should be used to actively engage children and young people in the planning and management of their learning environment, thus giving them an explicit stake in the learning process and its outcome. Children and young people's participation in wider aspects of learning needs to build on the work of school councils to secure real engagement in the learning process.

**Local Authority:** Create a strong supportive local system by helping schools to connect and collaborate with one another and with other community programmes to maximise sharing of facilities and good practice. They ensure that school provision is organised effectively in buildings that are fit for purpose so that every learner has access to a high quality, broad and balanced educational experience.

#### **Welsh Assembly Government:**

- Develop policies that support improved learner outcomes and support collaboration in the interests of learners, including working with local authorities, researchers and practitioners to develop banks of ideas that can be accessed electronically;
- bring together best practice;
- ensure that through consultation and joint working with local authorities and schools, government legislation and new programmes support school effectiveness and maximise opportunities;
- ensure that local authorities are funded to provide an appropriate school infrastructure and enable schools to improve learning outcomes.

National bodies, such as the General Teaching Council for Wales (GTCW) and Estyn are involved at all levels in informing policy development, as well as engaging with practitioners at a very practical level.

## **The Core Themes**

The School Effectiveness Framework is underpinned by five core themes. These themes permeate and cut across all aspects of our work and culture.

**Systems Thinking:** The understanding by leaders at all levels that changing schools requires purposeful engagement across the 'tri-levels' of school, local authority and Welsh Assembly Government.

**Bilingualism:** The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to creating a truly bilingual Wales and recognises the key contribution that schools and education will continue to make to achieving that goal. The need to treat the English and Welsh languages on a basis of equality will continue to underpin all policy development and service delivery. The School Effectiveness Framework provides a further vehicle for ensuring that both our national languages are properly reflected by all those involved within the schools system.

**High Performance Culture:** We expect all of our schools to have high expectations of themselves, their learners and the communities and partners that they work with. The School Effectiveness Framework emphasises an expectation of a high performance culture at every level from the classroom through to the Welsh Assembly Government itself, so that together we 'raise the bar and narrow the gap'.

**Equality:** The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to promoting equality of opportunity in all aspects of Welsh life and to addressing discrimination on grounds of race, religion, disability, age, gender and sexual orientation. *The Learning Country:- Vision into Action* explicitly states "We shall ensure that the benefits of improvements are enjoyed by all, in a fully comprehensive system of learning that serves all our communities well", and that we will "ensure that appropriate quality standards are in place to meet a range of additional needs." Core aim 5 (of our seven core aims) requires that children and young people are listened to, treated with respect, and are able to have their race and cultural identity recognised. A key element of this is respect for those children and young people whose first language is neither Welsh nor English.

**Supportive and Interdependent:** Research shows that to secure high quality outcomes, support for individual schools that recognises their particular and unique circumstances is essential. This support should come from professional learning communities built up between and across schools, local authorities and the Welsh Assembly Government. For change to be effective, Fullan (2006)<sup>10</sup> states that "we need schools learning from each other and districts learning from each other ... lateral capacity building."

## The Elements

### *Leadership*

Each part of the education community needs to build distributed leadership capacity and expertise throughout the system. Leadership needs to be emotionally intelligent, purposeful, enabling, influencing, motivating and focused on building the skills, knowledge and personal attributes of all those involved within the structure. In the context of services for children and young people, effective

leadership also involves ensuring that those children and young people are properly encouraged and supported to become involved in decision-making on issues that affect their learning. Leadership for learning means building and influencing networks in the interests of children and young people as well as leadership of an institution.

**Classroom:** Practitioners play a vital leadership role in education. Through their work, improvements in the learning outcomes of children and young people are achieved. Leadership in the classroom requires practitioners to lead the implementation of pedagogy, curriculum innovation and knowledge about learning for children and young people. Equally, it requires teachers to lead classroom assistants and work with professionals from other services to ensure that children and young people have access to appropriate support for their wellbeing and the best possible learning opportunities. Teachers need a professional development structure which values, recognises and develops classroom leadership skills.

**School:** Establishing clear values and expectations within a supportive framework to improve learning and teaching is the primary goal of school leadership. This requires governing bodies and leadership teams to work together to develop a shared commitment to excellence, consistent high quality provision and improved outcomes for children and young people. It also requires that resources - human, time and financial - are deployed effectively to support learning improvement in classrooms. Using workforce remodelling strategies, school leaders should ensure that all members of the workforce are able to focus on tasks appropriate to their roles and maintain a healthy work/life balance. Making the best use of skills and securing sufficient time for leadership responsibilities and preparation for excellence in learning are key contributors to improvement. Leaders in schools have a crucial role in motivating all those who are involved in children and young people's learning and wellbeing to co-ordinate their efforts to improve learner outcomes.

**Local Authority:** Authorities have a range of responsibilities, including:

- setting a vision for improved educational outcomes within the context of partnership working and the wider children and young people's agenda through CYPPs;
- leading other agencies in bringing about sustainable long term improvements in integrated provision for children and young people;
- leading head teachers and governors in consideration of performance and actively driving performance improvement at school level;
- supporting the development of leadership skills and collaborative working across schools in their area;
- promoting workforce reform, supporting schools in their remodelling strategies and facilitating the sharing of effective approaches to change management;
- narrowing the range of performance within schools and between schools;

- ensuring that local issues and challenges are met with local solutions;
- making sure that resources are deployed effectively, so that schools are in the right places, have adequate resources and are able to provide an appropriate range of experiences for children and young people.

Research suggests that the most effective local authorities are the ones that:

- focus unrelentingly on the core issue of learner performance;
- deploy resources to drive and support learning and teaching;
- fund schools on the basis of learner need so that low achievement can be targeted;
- develop the skills of head teachers and teachers in data handling;
- mobilise the whole community to support the school; and
- facilitate schools working together with collective responsibility/accountability for the learning of all children and young people in the area.

**Welsh Assembly Government:** Responsibilities include:

- ensuring that relevant policy development across departments is aligned to the School Effectiveness Framework and is focused on improving outcomes for children and young people's learning and wellbeing;
- developing a set of educational values and beliefs that are understood and shared by all;
- establishing the School Effectiveness Framework and working with local authorities and head teachers to bring about system change to achieve consistently high standards of learning across Wales;
- working with other organisations including schools, local authorities, the GTCW, Estyn and researchers to develop a broad-based pool of leaders through, for example, high quality, nationally agreed leadership programmes.
- targeting ring fenced resources strategically so that they have the maximum impact on improvement in performance.

### **Working with Others**

Effective schools are community focused and relevant to the lives of children and young people outside the school and school hours, recognising linguistic and cultural diversity. Whilst the need for community focus applies to all schools, it is particularly important in our most disadvantaged communities, where schools have a major role to play in offering children and young people the experiences and opportunities that their more privileged peers take for granted. Schools should engage with families and the broader community, including businesses, other statutory agencies and the voluntary sector. Schools also need to work with other agencies to address the wellbeing and citizen aspirations of individual learners. When schools work with other agencies to deliver joined-up programmes, the full range of resources and expertise can be harnessed to deliver improved learner outcomes and wellbeing.



**Classroom:** The classroom is the essential link between education and the local community. Research shows that learning outcomes improve when there is shared understanding between teachers, parents/carers and other professionals, of the processes that lead to improved learning and wellbeing in the classroom. Opportunities to participate in classroom activities enable families to build their own strengths as learning mentors. Congruence between school and the home provides children and young people with more effective assistance and encouragement. Teachers require strong support at every level within the Framework if they are to design effective learning programmes that improve the health and wellbeing of children and young people in different contexts. These include being supported and encouraged to develop healthy lifestyles and to access local health services they may need.

**School:** Involving children and young people and their families in decisions about their learning ensures that the community is engaged in supporting the improvement agenda. Schools have a responsibility to work with their local authority and other agencies, including voluntary sector bodies. Each has a key role to play in helping to address the needs of learners, including the wellbeing of individual children and young people. The expertise and resources of other agencies need to be aligned in support of school programmes. Schools need to be at the centre of developing community networks to promote learning and wellbeing.

**Local Authority:** Through their leadership of Children and Young People's Partnerships, local authorities have a central role to play in developing shared priorities and programmes for education services, social services, health services and voluntary sector providers which are aligned with improved learning and wellbeing. By co-ordinating a multi-agency approach based on the needs of the local learning community or family of schools, local authorities can ensure that the response to the needs of individual children and young people at school level is more effective. Partnership working should be the stimulus for tackling difficult issues and securing improved outcomes. Local authorities should encourage schools to be community schools, promoting a range of out-of-hours activities for young people and their families.

**Welsh Assembly Government:** Involving national stakeholders in understanding and delivering the School Effectiveness Framework is a role for the Assembly Government. Within Government, the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS) works with other Assembly Government departments, particularly Health and Social Services, to ensure coherence of policy and regulation that supports local co-operation and improved outcomes and wellbeing for children and young people.

## **Networks of Professional Practice**

To promote and share innovative practice across schools, local authorities and the Welsh Assembly Government, networks of professional practice must be built. These give leaders and practitioners access to emerging knowledge about school leadership, learning, teaching and children and young people's wellbeing. Sharing effective practice is essential if children and young people across Wales are to benefit from the excellent work being undertaken in individual classrooms. Fullan (2006)<sup>11</sup> identifies the need for professional learning communities to be positioned at a system-wide level, to facilitate collaboration on an intra-school, inter-school and school-local authority level. The basis must be strong professional learning communities within each school. Fullan (2006)<sup>12</sup>, describes professional learning communities as being:

*“about establishing lasting new collaborative cultures. Collaborative cultures are ones that focus on building the capacity for continuous improvement and are intended to be a new way of working and learning. They are meant to be enduring capacities not just another programme innovation.”*

There are already strong local networks within the local authority education consortia and amongst families of schools. There are also networks of young people's organisations that have a vital contribution to make.

Networks need to work at identifying what does and does not work. Fullan (2004)<sup>13</sup> points out that while networks do not have the 'line-authority' for taking good ideas and creating the intense learning process that is essential for sustained implementation, or for accountability, they do have the potential for focused implementation.

**Classroom:** Classroom practitioners must have opportunities to engage in professional learning activities and to share beliefs and understandings about learning, learner engagement, pedagogy and wellbeing with their colleagues. Practitioner enquiry and learning is developed through professional interaction with other teachers and support staff and is developed further through structured classroom observation. It is strengthened when there is support available from those with high quality professional development expertise, as well as through networks of practitioners; and when opportunities exist for practitioners to disseminate their professional learning. If this professional knowledge is to be shared with others, professional learning communities need to be established within and between schools.

**School:** Many of our most effective schools have already established professional learning communities, although they may not actually be called this. These need to be part of every school so that networking designed to share effective practice, to deepen professional knowledge and understanding, and to reduce within-school variation is in place. Schools must also continue to build on the networking opportunities that exist in many local authorities. Promotion of families of schools enables greater sharing of innovative and effective practice, and access to strong and ever-growing knowledge bases and a wider range of learning resources.

Professional learning communities within and between schools should include support staff as well as teachers. Embedding remodelling principles in school improvement facilitates a cultural change leading to increased workforce collaboration on identifying and delivering improvement strategies and sharing learning. As part of the workforce remodelling agenda, many of our most effective schools have effectively utilised the talents of support staff. Networks of professional practice which involve professionals working in other disciplines, such as health, broaden that understanding and help to move from narrow approaches to more holistic and integrated actions. Similarly, there is potential to establish partnership working with networks of non-formal and informal learning settings.

**Local Authority:** Local authorities have an important role to play in promoting and supporting the development of networks of professional practice between schools in their area and across local authority boundaries, and in promoting the common moral purpose, social justice and equity that lie at the heart of school effectiveness. There is already a growing consortia infrastructure to support networking between local authorities. This infrastructure needs to focus increasingly on supporting and promoting the effective practice that is being led by schools and turning it into system-wide knowledge and shared expertise. Consortia arrangements provide an excellent base on which to build a culture of shared working and innovation, taking into account local contexts and circumstances. Local authorities are well placed to develop professional networks that go beyond the confines of education through their lead role in planning for children and young people.

**Welsh Assembly Government:** The Assembly Government has an important role in supporting the infrastructure for the development of networks of professional practice across local authorities and the dissemination of professional learning between practitioners across local authorities. This work is being taken forward through the *Making the Connections* programme. Similarly, ensuring that the Welsh education system is actively involved in international networks and engages with the best researchers and thinkers in the UK and internationally, is a key factor in securing continued educational improvement across Wales. The National Pedagogy Strategy is aimed at promoting and sharing effective practice in learning and teaching across the education system.

### **Intervention and Support**

Whilst the body of research and practical experience on school effectiveness and improvement clearly shows that schools themselves need to be the fulcrum and dynamo for change, there will always be a need for intervention and support to lift performance. This must be purposeful and applied as early as possible, using a variety of strategies to address the areas identified for improvement. It should not be perceived simply as a response to failure, but rather intervention and support which helps to improve effectiveness.

**Classroom:** Practitioners are in the best position to identify children and young people's needs with regard to support and intervention. Teachers and support staff have responsibility to support children and young people so that they can all achieve their full potential. Intervention in children and young people's learning varies according to the level of need. There is a particular need to intervene where a child or young person is underachieving, or has additional needs which impede their learning. Guaranteed time set aside for planning, preparation and assessment provides an opportunity for teachers to assess learners' progress, identify specific needs and plan appropriate interventions. Research shows that intervention is more effective if it is negotiated with young people rather than imposed upon them.

**School:** Intervention is an important element of school management to ensure that all teachers and support staff work effectively. In identifying time for the discharge of leadership and management responsibilities, schools should ensure that intervention strategies are accorded a high priority. Dedicated headship time also allows for more high level strategic intervention planning. Reducing within-school variation by raising everyone's game closer to the level of the highest performers is critical to success.

Schools have a key part to play in securing the right support and intervention for children and young people. This is particularly important for those with additional needs, so as to secure their educational achievement, welfare and wellbeing. Ensuring that children and young people's wellbeing is being addressed is likely to require support at the whole school level, from the local authority and often through multi-agency action involving health providers and voluntary bodies. The Children and Young People's Partnership is a vehicle for providing schools with access to multi-agency support.

**Local Authority:** Intervention in and support for schools needs to be early, differentiated according to the circumstances of the school and reflect the best research knowledge. Availability of resources for school improvement plays a key role in raising performance. Local authorities are already expected to include in their CYPPs arrangements for monitoring schools, establishing triggers for intervention and identifying the support they will provide for schools. School inspection reports provide a source of information on which local authorities can draw. Where schools are in special measures or in need of significant improvement, there is a requirement for local authorities to monitor the implementation of schools' actions plans and to intervene in and support those schools. Best practice suggests that local authorities should monitor the post inspection action plans of all their schools.

Local authorities have a key role in ensuring that appropriate support and resource is provided to schools when working with children and young people, particularly those with additional needs.

**Welsh Assembly Government:** The Assembly Government is responsible for aligning its resources and programmes to support all children and young people to achieve high levels of personal excellence. This includes programmes to tackle learner disadvantage, additional learning needs and inclusion and variation in performance. It is responsible for securing data collection and providing feedback and robust comparative information. The Assembly Government has powers to intervene in local authorities and schools as a last resort in instances of failure. The Assembly Government also has a role in ensuring that higher education and other research organisations are well connected to the improvement agenda, especially the drive to improve pedagogy.

### **Improvement and Accountability**

The aim of the School Effectiveness Framework is to improve educational experiences and life-chances for all children and young people. This will be done by improving on best performance, and narrowing the gap between those schools that are the most effective in adding value to the outcomes for their children and young people, and those that are less effective. Evidence will be used as the basis for challenge and discussion of strengths and weaknesses - to identify and confront under or coasting performance, to identify improvement activity and to set high but realistic targets and standards. This cannot be limited to narrow academic attainment and includes a range of analyses taking account of contextual factors with the aim of identifying and measuring the wider skills that children and young people gain. Accountability requires all levels to report on absolute and relative performance to key stakeholders, including parents/carers and local communities.

**Classroom:** Improvement in the classroom has the most direct effect on learning outcomes for children and young people. Research shows that there is greater variance in learner performance between classrooms than there is between schools. The ability of practitioners to set high but achievable targets for learners, to make rigorous use of formative and summative assessment methods, to provide feedback to them and to employ effective learning and teaching techniques are the keys to school improvement and accountability. The involvement of children and young people in setting their own targets for learning, across a range of skills, is essential if their individual overall needs are to be met.

**School:** Existing procedures require schools to review their performance and to identify improvement targets in their school improvement plans. Targets need to include improvement in both the quality of teaching and learner outcomes. They need to take account of the views of children and young people, the views of parents/carers and the community served by the school, and inspection findings. There also need to be agreed strategies for involvement of individual children and young people in setting their personal and learning targets.

Schools are responsible for maintaining accurate electronic records relating to their pupil population and key performance outcomes. They are also responsible for providing data to their local authority and ultimately to the Assembly Government

as specified under National Data Collection arrangements, and for the timely transfer of information when pupils change school. Schools should ensure that national data are supplemented with local information to enable finer graded consideration of strengths, weaknesses and inter-departmental performance differences as appropriate to the size and context of the school. Schools are held accountable through Estyn inspection, publication of pupil attainment results and reporting to the governing body and parents/carers.

**Local Authority:** Local authorities are accountable for overall learner outcomes in schools they maintain. They are held to account through Estyn inspection and local scrutiny arrangements. Local authorities assist schools in the management, provision and use of performance and management information including data provided as part of national data collections. Local authorities use national data and analyses, supplemented with local information, as relevant, to support school and authority self evaluation. Authorities need to ensure that:

- an appropriate range of data on school performance and local context is collected, analysed and fed back to schools;
- key school personnel are trained in the use of this data;
- the data is used to support challenge;
- schools set targets that are ambitious but achievable and feed into overall targets for the authority set out in its CYPPs; and
- the relative performance of schools is monitored.

**Welsh Assembly Government:** The Assembly Government is responsible for ensuring that school effectiveness is addressed in partnership with local authorities and schools. This School Effectiveness Framework is the vehicle for securing consistent action across Wales. The Assembly Government also sets national targets for attainment and plays a part in working with Estyn to develop the inspection framework.

The Assembly Government is responsible for:

- setting national standards for key data used by and collected from schools and local authorities;
- providing secure facilities for the transfer and sharing of pupils' personal and performance data;
- providing contextual analysis tools for use by all stakeholders;
- the publication of performance statistics;
- setting minimum standards for the reporting of pupil progress to parents/carers and the wider public.

The Assembly Government will work to support local authorities and schools to improve the quality, range and interpretation of management and performance information. The Assembly Government is held accountable through scrutiny by the National Assembly and Wales Audit Office audit and review programmes.

## **Curriculum and Teaching**

High quality teaching is the bedrock on which effective educational performance is built, enabling children and young people to acquire skills, knowledge and the understanding needed to reach their full potential. From their initial training onwards, practitioners must engage in high quality professional development.

For successful learning and teaching to take place, building upon the learning capacities of children and young people, the curriculum must be relevant and personalised to the needs of the child or young person. In Wales, national requirements ensure curriculum entitlement, whilst the flexibility inherent within the revised curriculum recognises children and young people's personal development. In turn, this personalises learning and prepares them to play an active part in society as young citizens, participating in community and working life in the 21st century.

**Classroom:** School workforce remodelling has enabled teachers to focus more of their time on learning and teaching. Practitioners are increasingly working together within and between schools and other learning settings to improve their skills and knowledge. Through professional learning communities, practitioners develop a sense of collective professionalism and have opportunities to share planning and to learn from one another. New knowledge, especially recent findings in relation to developing thinking, assessment for learning and differentiated teaching, can then be widely disseminated and applied.

Knowledge, understanding, and application of a collaborative approach are essential so that learners develop transferable skills and are actively involved in their learning. Learning is most effective when practitioners personalise it through teaching that:

- develops learning capacity through basic and key skills; and
- allows for the interests of children and young people to be utilised to ensure engagement and motivation.

Research shows that children and young people learn better if they have well-developed emotional intelligence. Programmes that help children and young people in their emotional development can have a significant impact on outcomes. There is significant evidence that caring and learning relationships within classrooms are key factors in effective learning.

**School:** An important determinant of school effectiveness is the access practitioners have to professional knowledge about how children and young people learn and develop skills, together with the understanding practitioners have of the implications of this for learning and teaching. This includes understanding how children and young people's wellbeing affects engagement and recent findings about developing thinking, assessment for learning and learning environments. The infrastructure that schools have in place to build on this professional learning is critical - for example, teacher teams, action research-based improvement programmes, time for reflective dialogue and

planning, and links with performance management. Schools need to establish high expectations matched with high quality support programmes to improve practitioners' effectiveness. This requires schools to be key partners in initial teacher education, to have in place high quality programmes for teacher induction and early professional development, and to support teachers in developing leadership roles.

**Local Authority:** Local authorities have a key role to play in curriculum development and dissemination, enabling practitioners to learn from one another across school and authority boundaries. This is especially important for small schools and small departments in secondary schools when subject expertise to cover the whole curriculum is a particular challenge. Local authorities have a further role to play in ensuring that schools raise children and young people's levels of achievement, particularly in developing literacy, thinking, communication, numeracy and ICT. Through their advisory services, local authorities have a direct influence on curriculum development and delivery.

**Welsh Assembly Government:** The Assembly Government has the responsibility for developing and reviewing the national curriculum and its assessment so that it is relevant to and capable of engaging all learners. This includes seeking and responding to the views of children and young people. The revised curriculum and assessment arrangements, including the Foundation Phase, 14-19 Learning Pathways and the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification will provide an effective and coherent basis for improving outcomes. There is a focus on skills, particularly in the key areas of developing literacy, thinking, communication, numeracy and ICT.

The Assembly Government recognises the importance of a high quality workforce and it has put in place course requirements for Initial Teacher Training (ITT) leading to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) standards. 'End of Induction' standards ensure quality and the Pedagogy programme will build on that quality, enabling practitioners to learn more about effective strategies and approaches to learning and reflect on their practice.



## Researching, Refining and Implementing the Framework

The Framework will only work and systematically drive up learner outcomes and wellbeing if it is owned by school staff and leadership teams (including governors), local authorities and the Assembly Government. It is essential therefore that they work together to:

- provide high quality learning and assessment opportunities and content that create intellectual excitement amongst children and young people and school staff and build on effective activities that are already in place;
- engage key stakeholders at the right time and in the right way;
- develop a tri-level approach to school effectiveness so that this becomes a collaborative endeavour;
- establish a pace so that there are improvements in the short to medium term whilst building in sustainability;
- develop success criteria/accountability;
- establish research and development that supports and deepens the work; and
- resource the implementation of the Framework so that it can happen.

The Framework draws on the latest research findings and has been developed in partnership with head teachers, academics<sup>14</sup>, local authority education directors and their staff, and Assembly Government staff. However, it needs to be trialled and refined. To this end, it is proposed that a three stage research, development and implementation process is put in place.

### Phase 1 - January to July 2008

Three (full time equivalent) head teachers - one each from the primary, secondary and special schools sectors - have been seconded to the Assembly Government to work in conjunction with school improvement officers from local authorities, Assembly Government staff and other key stakeholders to:

- take each element of the Framework and expand its application at each of the four levels; identifying areas to be trialled and researched for each element; and describing what excellence would look like and milestones on the way;
- develop the descriptors within the Framework for the school level;
- analyse the information that is currently available on school performance;
- develop a programme to train 'associates' to work with schools;
- develop materials for roll out of the Framework to schools; and
- map current training and continuing professional development programmes on to the Framework.

A group of local authority directors and school improvement officers will be asked to work with the Assembly Government's School Effectiveness project team to develop the content for the local authority level of the Framework so as to build capacity within and across local authorities. They will draw on the GTCW Professional Development Framework, elements of which, e.g. Chartered Teacher are designed to support, identify and recognise excellent practice.

Success criteria and key indicators will be developed to measure outcomes linked to each core element in the Framework. The secondees, working as part of the project team and with stakeholders, will develop a set of key indicators of success.

Four regional conferences will be held in February/March 2008 at which the Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, senior DCELLS officials, local authority and school representatives will outline the Framework. Head teachers will be invited to attend, along with representatives of local authorities, unions, national bodies and other stakeholders. The conferences will provide an opportunity to build shared understanding in preparation for Phase 2.

Key stakeholders involved in Phase 1 include children and young people, the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), Association of Directors of Education in Wales (ADEW), the teacher and school improvement professionals unions, GTCW, members of the Ministerial Advisory Group, key staff within the Assembly Government, Estyn and school governors.

There will be researchers in place to comment on the programme as it develops, so that lessons are learnt and refinements made.

## **Phase 2 - September 2008 to April 2009**

This phase will involve pilot School Effectiveness Framework programmes being established in each of the four local authority education consortia. The schools to be involved in the pilots will be agreed with each of the consortia but the objective will be to work with clusters of schools. The pilots are therefore likely to involve schools in one or, at most, two authorities in each consortium. Each consortium will identify two or three groups of schools in their area to include primary, secondary and special schools, a total of 12 pilot schools per consortium.

For the Framework to be effective it must be owned locally by individual schools and their local authorities; and must build on existing work in schools and local authorities and on current Assembly Government initiatives.

To test how this can best be done and whether different delivery mechanisms are appropriate in different circumstances, the Assembly Government will work with authorities to trial two approaches to the use of 'associates'. The intention is for each approach to be separately piloted by two consortia.

The first approach will involve appointing an experienced and successful head teacher or school improvement professional as an 'associate' to work with the

schools in a developmental capacity. The Assembly Government will pay for associates to be released for 25% of their time to work on school effectiveness.

**Each associate will work with 4 to 10 schools to:**

- identify, in conjunction with local authority school improvement staff, what work is already being undertaken with the school and determine how to add value to that work;
- ensure the schools understand the Framework and the focus on improved wellbeing and learning outcomes for children and young people;
- support the school in mapping its self evaluation strategies to the Framework;
- shape discussion of the school's development within each element of the Framework, identifying interdependencies between the elements;
- ensure that the school is making rigorous use of data and other evidence as the basis for developing improvement strategies;
- support the alignment of the school's priorities for development (as encapsulated within its school development plan) with the Framework;
- assist each school in reducing internal variation in outcomes by identifying strengths and areas for development;
- explore solutions within and across schools which start from and recognise the context in which the school operates;
- facilitate professional learning communities within and across schools;
- support schools in developing an innovative culture that encourages new ways of working to engage learners and raise standards;
- develop the capacity of leaders to reflect on performance across the school and identify areas for improvement;
- be informed about and disseminate research evidence on effective practice.

**The associates will need:**

- an understanding of the research and background to the School Effectiveness Framework and systems thinking;
- an ability to listen and communicate;
- an ability to engender trust;
- an ability to provoke rigorous and honest debate;
- an ability to use and interpret data;
- to be solution orientated;
- networking, coaching and capacity building skills;
- a relentless focus on outcomes for children and young people.

Associates will undertake a 10 day training course facilitated by academics, local authority specialists and DCELLS staff associated with the programme, to enable them to work with pilot schools during Phase 2 of the project and to support further development of the programme.

The second approach will involve inviting consortia to develop their own programme for implementing the Framework in the pilot schools, building on school improvement activity they already have in place rather than using associates. The personnel involved will need to undertake the associates training programme (adapted as necessary) and will be expected to use the materials being developed for schools as described above. Each consortium will have to agree their proposed approach with the Assembly Government, including the added value in terms of outcomes to be achieved by linking their existing activity and the Framework approach in this way. The Assembly Government will provide the training and materials for use with schools and meet the costs of any additional work up to the level of resource which would otherwise have been provided for associates.

Each pilot will need to identify the improvements sought and the performance measures to be used to evaluate effectiveness. A research programme will track progress and improvements made during implementation of the pilot phase.

The expectation is that improvements within schools should start to emerge within a year, especially in the areas of system reform, improved accountability and joined up services. This should allow improvements in learning and wellbeing to be realised quickly.

Towards the end of the initial pilots, the schools involved will be brought together locally to run workshops and provide the opportunity for schools that had not been involved to learn about what has been achieved.

### **Phase 3 - mid 2009 onwards**

At the end of the pilot phase the Assembly Government will decide, in light of experience of the pilot phase and of its evaluation, on arrangements for rolling out the School Effectiveness Framework to all schools over a three to five year period. This will involve consideration of whether to adopt the use of associates across Wales or to allow for a variety of approaches to suit local circumstances.

Whichever approach is adopted will entail the expansion of training for more head teachers and school improvement professionals to become involved in working with schools on the Framework. The intention would be that associates or others would work with a group of schools for a period and, having embedded the framework approach, move on to work with a new group of schools.

Over time, therefore, all schools would be offered the opportunity to work intensively on the Framework with an external facilitator or facilitators. Access to such facilitators would be an entitlement for all schools and it is anticipated that schools will see the benefit of becoming part of the framework approach and will want to participate.

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- <sup>9</sup> Professor Michael Fullan is an international leader on educational change. He has developed a number of partnerships designed to bring about major school improvements and is engaged in training, consulting, and evaluation of change projects around the world. He has published widely in many languages. <http://www.michaelfullan.ca/>
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- <sup>14</sup> We would particularly like to acknowledge the contribution made by Professors David Egan, David Hopkins and David Reynolds to the development of this Framework.