

Engaging Welsh Modern Language Learners in Secondary Schools: Mentoring as a Proven Practice

Lucy Jenkins

University of Cardiff

Abstract: This article will outline the recent context of language learning in Wales, setting out the workings of the project and consider how the MFL Student Mentoring Project has intersected with recent strategies to promote language learning to pupils beyond the compulsory language learning stage (age 14). It will evaluate the development of a digital mentoring platform, Digi-Languages, and begin to assess the value of this online platform for increasing motivation and appetite for language learning. Finally, this article will reflect on how providing insights into other cultures can motivate further young learners to study a MFL and how e-mentoring offers new opportunities for intercultural exchange between two first-language English or Welsh speakers.

Keywords: Wales; language learning; secondary schools; mentoring; Digi-Languages; cross-sector.

Background

The Modern Foreign Languages Student Mentoring Project began in 2015 under the Welsh Government's Global Futures strategy 2015-2020. The aim of the strategy is to promote and raise the profile of modern foreign languages as an important subject not only at GCSE (Level 2) but also as a longer-term choice that can lead to career opportunities. In addition, it aims to provide enhanced learning opportunities to engage and excite learners (Welsh Government, 2017). The MFL Student Mentoring Project, funded by the Global Futures strategy, targets improved uptake of MFLs at GCSE level by training undergraduate and postgraduate language students to mentor pupils in secondary schools across Wales. It creates opportunities for both mentors and mentees and has significantly improved uptake at GCSE. Recognition came in November 2017 when the Chartered Institute of Linguists awarded the project the Threlford Cup.¹

The project, now in its third year, is built on a partnership model between Aberystwyth, Bangor, Cardiff and Swansea Universities, as well as a strong connection with the four educational consortia across Wales: EAS, CSC, ERW and GWE¹. Regional consortia are a key element of the national implementation plan for improving schools and for driving self-improvement in schools (Welsh Government, 2014). Through linking with regional consortia, the project thrives on developed links with many schools across Wales and

¹ The Threlford Cup is awarded on an annual basis to a project that has had demonstrable impact on fostering a love for language learning in others.

this connection features as a key reason for the project's success. In this academic cycle alone, the project team has worked with 69 schools across Wales, and we continue to target increasingly ambitious numbers.

Mentoring offers an innovative intervention for schools at a crucial point in the academic cycle. Pupils in Wales study Welsh and one additional language for years 7, 8 and 9 (ages 11/12 – 13/14). After Year 9, the additional language is no longer compulsory. The non-compulsory nature of the subject poses challenges on many levels and has been a contributing factor to the decline of modern languages over recent years, not only in Wales, but across the UK. Wales, however, finds itself in a troubling position, even when compared to the other devolved nations. This was highlighted by the most recent Language Trends Wales Survey, which confirmed prominent trends of previous years, revealing that fewer than one in four students in most Welsh schools are taking an MFL to GCSE level (Tinsley, 2017). In a national landscape where numbers are falling, budget pressures are increasing and Brexit discussions are entering full swing, mentoring has a significant role to play in promoting second and third language acquisition and increasing intercultural understanding.

This article will outline the recent context of language learning in Wales, setting out the workings of the project and consider how the MFL Student Mentoring Project has intersected with recent strategies to promote language learning to pupils beyond the compulsory language learning stage. It will evaluate the development of a digital mentoring platform, Digi-Languages, and begin to assess the value of this online platform for increasing motivation and appetite for language learning. Overall, this article will reflect on how providing insights into other cultures can motivate further young learners to study a MFL and how e-mentoring offers new opportunities for intercultural exchange between two first-language English or Welsh speakers.

Contexts for Language Learning in Wales

As a bilingual nation, it seems counter-intuitive that language learning does not thrive in the classroom in Wales. Whilst Welsh is compulsory until Year 9, the relationship pupils have with the study of Welsh is often complex. Many students are 'turned off' by the compulsory nature of the language and the often compartmentalised nature of teaching, with currently little bridging between Welsh and MFL. This arguably makes pupils feel that their Welsh skills offer little benefit to further language study. Consequently, pupils' relationships with language learning can be fraught. This is despite the fact that studying Welsh from an early age has demonstrably facilitated easier acquisition of additional languages. For this reason, the new curriculum for Wales offers a renewed opportunity to bring Welsh and language learning together in a coherent language-learning continuum (Welsh Government, 2015). The study of Welsh is being coupled with the study of other languages under an 'area of learning and experience (AoLE)' called Literacy, Languages and Communication. The following abstract from the Donaldson Successful Futures report (Donaldson, 2015) highlights the proposed vision for language learning in the new curriculum:

The role of multiple language learning is particularly important in Wales. Learning other languages introduces children and young people to other cultures. There is also evidence that successful learning of another language can influence the capacity to learn subsequent languages and may have wider cognitive benefits. The teaching and learning of Welsh is a priority for the Welsh Government. It forms a key element of this Area of Learning and Experience, with the intention that Welsh language will be compulsory to age 16.

The bi-lingual plus one strategy, introduced by Welsh Government in 2015, highlights the ambition of policy makers to further the agenda of language learning (Welsh Government, 2015). This was reinforced by the publication of Cymraeg 2050: Million Welsh Speakers in 2016 (Welsh Government, 2016). With Welsh placed as a priority area, the bringing together of what we now call ‘international languages’ and Welsh under the new AoLE, has potential to reap rewards for MFL, by highlighting the increased capacity for Welsh learners to acquire further languages.

The importance of cultural bridging also figures heavily in the recommendations for the new curriculum (Donaldson, 2015). The additive effect of language learning as an exercise that contributes to one’s own sense of national identity is a key focus of the mentoring project, which provides tangible bridges between Welsh culture and other world cultures. Research on the motivating capacity of culture for language learning is not new. Dörnyei (2001:15) points out that this was indeed the focus of studies of the 1960s-1990s. He argued that:

As languages are socially and culturally bound, their effective study requires a positive disposition towards everything that the L2 is associated with: its culture, its speakers its influence.

In addition, McCall argues that the best vehicles for providing this are native speaker mentors (McCall, 2011). Furthermore, first language English or Welsh speaking international language learners can be effective near-peer connectors to other places, peoples and languages. They can authentically reinforce the discovery of another culture from a British perspective – positively. Studies of recent years have shown that ‘learner’s frustration and inability to perceive or articulate their own progress’ is a significant barrier to language learners (Coleman et al, 2007). Mentors can challenge and support pupils to overcome this.

Language mentors also represent a form of Britishness that draws other cultures nearer and encourages curiosity. This supports one of Donaldson’s key recommendations: that all learners should develop as ‘ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world’, highlighting the importance of young Welsh learners being ‘rooted in their own cultures [in order to have] a strong sense of identity as citizens of Wales, the United Kingdom, Europe and the wider world’ (Donaldson, 2015). In other words, to look outwards pupils need to look at their own local context and to challenge their relationship with their own culture and environment.

In this context, the MFL Student Mentoring Project strives to bridge a perceived gap between different cultures, reminding pupils of the intercultural and multi-lingual community they are already a part of. As mobile bridges between UK-communities and extended European and wider-world communities, university mentors are ambassadors for a physical and mental agility and mobility. They are tangible near-peer role models (NPRs) for our young Welsh pupils, and help them aspire to higher education and continued language learning.

Mentoring and motivation

Mentors on the project undergo training in the skill of mentoring. Mentoring is 'an interactive process, which takes place between individuals of differing levels of experience and expertise which incorporates interpersonal or psychological development, career and/or educational development and socialisation functions (Caldwell et al, 2004). Mentors have to create a secure environment in which they become a 'critical friend' to the mentee, able to share their experiences to provide guidance and advice (Clutterbuck Associates, 2009).

Crucially, mentoring is not teaching. Mentoring is a listening exercise that takes place between a mentor and mentee and provides benefits for both. In this case, the mentor is a university student. The benefits of near-peer role models should not be underestimated. Murphey reports that NPRs motivate students because 'their (the mentors') excellence seems more possible and easy to see and replicate because they are in some ways already very similar... within our zone of proximal development' (Murphey, 1998).

MFL mentoring takes place over two 6-week cycles – one in the autumn term and one in the spring term. Prior to going into schools, mentors undergo an intensive weekend of professional training. Mentoring works best when the pupil to mentor ratio is low, therefore group sizes are normally limited to 6-8 pupils per group. This year, the project has worked in 69 schools across Wales. Schools are within a 45-minute travel distance of the hub university, in order to make the mentoring commitment manageable for mentors. Mentors stimulate discussion and encourage participants to question and exchange. A typical session with a group of mentees will last up to one hour and mentors decide with their schools how many groups they will mentor throughout the cycle. Continuity is vital, so mentors must commit to see each group once a week for 6 weeks to ensure that the pupils have continuous input.

The MFL mentoring model is less about building specific language skills (improving grammar, sentence construction, introducing tenses) and more about fostering a mindset that challenges assumed views about others and champions intercultural understanding and curiosity. A typical session will involve discussion around existing cultural habits of the mentees and the drawing of subtle connections to cognate cultural habits in other parts of the world. Often, this demonstrates that in Wales and the UK we are already drawing on other cultures to nourish our own. For example, discussion and activities around food cultures will likely spark conversation around the cultural adoption of Indian and Chinese foods within the UK. Have we anglicised their food

cultures? What does the way we eat suggest about our attitudes to other cultures? Do we realise how international our menus are?

Being able to challenge the myth that young people do not want to and are not interested in other languages is one of the rewards of working with many pupils across Wales. Young people continue to be infinitely curious and inquisitive about others. The difficulty for young people today is not a lack of willingness to learn other languages, but the mixed messages that they are receiving. With schools reducing time allocated to languages, Brexit in full swing and little publicity for the importance of language skills in the workplace, young people perceive opting for languages as too great a risk. Mentoring cuts through such messaging around language learning with one clear, decisive message: **'Learning languages opens doors to other worlds'**. The clarity, the repetition and the exemplification of this in the university mentors demonstrates the benefits of studying languages.

The benefits for mentees are many, with teachers and mentors commenting on increased confidence and improved willingness to contribute to discussions as key outcomes. One mentor commented that a key moment for them was,

[...] seeing quiet children become more confident in themselves through helping them realise their language abilities. It showed me that it really makes a difference to young people. (Mentor participant comment, survey undertaken for evaluation of Digi-Languages, March 2018)

This highlights the accessibility of the project and the importance of NPRs with comparable experiences being able to challenge doubts around a learner's capacity to learn a language.

In quantitative terms, an external evaluation of the project conducted after its first two years, highlights the success of the project, converting 57% of pupils to taking a GCSE MFL in the first year and 50% in the second year. This was enabled by ensuring that mentees completed a survey prior to commencing the project, and that schools targeted pupils who were 'not sure' about taking a MFL GCSE, or who indicated that they will not pursue a MFL GCSE. The project does not aim 'to preach to the converted', but to set in motion a change from not wishing to take a GCSE MFL, to making the choice to pursue a GCSE MFL. The table below evaluates data collated prior to the mentoring intervention, and after its completion, during the first academic cycle (2015-2016). It shows that 3 out of the 4 consortia witnessed a substantial increase in the number of pupils opting to take a GCSE MFL (cf. Table 1).

Table 1: Phase 1 Evaluation Data by Consortium

	Pupils mentored	Initial data available	Originally choosing MFL	Choosing MFL post-intervention	Proportion opting/Mentees
CSC	39	28	20	29	74%
EAW	22	16	10	16	73%
ERW	41	15	5	14	34%
GWE	34	34	21	18	53%
Total	136	93	56	77	57%

The data from the second academic cycle (2016-2017) shows a marked increase in the number of participating pupils changing their minds to opt to take a GCSE MFL. These figures demonstrate an overall increase in the number of pupils engaged in the project (cf. Table 2).

Table 2: Phase 2 Evaluation Data

	Pupils mentored	Baseline data available	Pupils baseline choices unknown	Originally choosing MFL (N)	Originally choosing MFL (% of baseline)	Pupils baseline choices unknown, deemed originally choosing MFL	Total deemed to have originally chosen MFL	Choosing MFL post-intervention	Now choosing MLF (% of mentees)	Added Value (N)	Added Value (%)
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
CSC	226	168	58	60	36%	21	81	114	50%	33	41%
EAW	166	84	82	23	27%	22	45	89	54%	44	145%
ERW	330	202	128	59	29%	37	96	173	52%	77	118%
GWE	146	95	51	16	17%	9	25	61	42%	36	183%
Total	868	549	319	158	29%	89	247	437	50%	190	77%

Mentoring is also a portal to Higher Education. Working in close contact with a university mentor, mentees start to see for themselves what university looks like, breaking down barriers around accessibility and offering tangible role models. Many mentees commented that one of the things they enjoyed the most was the 'introduction to university life' that their mentor provided. This reinforces the importance of cross-sector work for raising aspirations, and the role that mentors can play within this.

Mentor perspectives

A question often asked is,

What motivates a second year, final year or postgraduate modern languages student to commit a significant amount of time to working in a secondary school, particularly if they are not predisposed to teaching as a career?

The MFL mentors are committed to sharing the positive experiences they have derived from their own linguistic and cultural experiences. For many, it is as much a social mission as anything else. At a time when the UK, and thereby Wales, risks appearing isolationist in the context of Brexit, MFL mentors feel able to share a message of social integration because they have experienced the benefits of living with other languages, peoples and cultures. Each mentor receives the financial incentive of a £200 bursary per 6-week cycle, which adds to the appeal of participating, but the financial reimbursement is minimal in comparison to the amount of work that we expect a mentor to complete during the course of the project.

In addition to this social commitment, mentors benefit from significant professional development. The skills gained through participation in the project are transferable to any career; resilience, organisation, time-management, creativity and responsiveness in the face of the unexpected. Mentors often remark that working in the pressured environment of a school boosts their own confidence and their connection with their own language-learning journey – reinforcing purpose and mission. During a survey undertaken for evaluation of Digi-Languages in March 2018, we collected a range of views. One mentor commented that one of her key mentoring moments was

[...] learning for myself how useful languages are and how they have already benefitted me enormously, which I hadn't really realised before.

Professional training and the need to create session plans and activities encourages mentors to re-think what they already know about languages and other cultures. Another mentor commented that the most rewarding thing about mentoring is

[...] when the mentees finally recognise the importance of the languages they speak but that they don't consider to be significant (e.g. Welsh). This highlights the importance of every language and my mentees have been very empowered by that.²

Mentors consistently state that empowering a learner to recognise their own strengths and weaknesses is one of their greatest satisfactions of the project.

The project has also had an impact on mentors' perceptions of teaching as a career; reaffirming for some their desire to teach, but opening the idea to others that may not have previously considered it as a career. One mentor commented that a key moment was

[...] seeing the children realise the importance of language and actually want to take a language as a GCSE. It helped to show me that the children we mentor as the next generation of linguists, which helped with my decision to want to become a teacher.

Digital Developments

Now in its third year, the project seeks to challenge more traditional content-driven language learning, with the introduction of activities that promote self-reflexive curiosity and questioning. Taking languages away from the 'siloed' experience that students are often familiar with, MFL mentors aim to bring languages together to highlight the interconnectedness of languages with other disciplines. In addition, the focus for this year has been to provide opportunities to schools that are further than 45 minutes away from one of the four hub universities. We have achieved this through the creation of an e-mentoring platform called Digi-Languages. This resource is a blended learning tool which brings together face-to-face mentoring with digital technology to create an interactive, e-mentoring platform.

Single and Muller (2001: 108) define e-mentoring as

[...] a relationship that is established between a more senior individual (mentor) and a (less) skill (less) experienced individual, primarily using electronic communications... to help him or her succeed, while also assisting in the development of the mentor.

Sproul and Kiesler (1991) argue that 'markers of social status are not as visible in electronic communication.... and this makes them less important in the interaction', thereby suggesting that one of the benefits of e-mentoring is the ability to depersonalise/disengage the mentor-mentee relationship from potential social barriers. Bierema and Hill (2005) meanwhile suggest that improved writing skills for both mentee and mentors is something that makes e-mentoring a useful initiative. The greatest benefit of Digi-Languages thus far has been the blended approach, which allows for the proven benefits of face-to-face mentoring to be maintained and reflected in the Digi-languages ethos and programme. Language learning is an intimate process where the learner must reveal his/her vulnerabilities. The blended communication method, whilst allowing for the development of a relationship, also creates a space for reflection and comprehension, allowing for a more refined response to a specific 'problem'. We will carry out further evaluation of the impact of Digi-Languages over the coming months.

Housed on the Welsh Government learning resources website Hwb (www.hwb.co.uk) pupils access the 6 week resource in a protected and educational environment. A Digi-Languages cycle runs for 6 weeks beginning with a two-hour face-to-face session, which is crucial for the mentor and mentees to start developing a working relationship. Weeks 2-5 take place online, working through the weekly resources, and in week 6, the mentor returns to the school for a reflective and creative session. Speaking digitally on a weekly basis allows mentors to build a relationship and creates a unique space for mentees to voice their opinions and ideas. The Digi-Languages tool encourages students to reflect on themselves, their community and their environment and to connect them to the global community. Discussions centre on food, sport cultures, science, business and creativity. Working with multiple partners including the Ministry of Defence, Cardiff City Football Club and Cardiff University's Brain Imaging Research Centre, resources have

been created specifically for the purpose of the platform, aiming to show the connectedness of languages with diverse careers and disciplines. Using a variety of quizzes, videos, activities and scenario-based learning, the resources gradually increase in intellectual complexity, requiring the user to reflect on languages as 'live' and multi-faceted. For example, mentees are asked to propose how they might resolve a language scenario that arises in a conflict zone.

Extending Languages: Science and Creativity

The transferability of languages, and their relationship with other disciplines, is a key focus of the Digi-languages platform. From looking at the brain activity stimulated by code switching, to the relationship between the ancient Ogham language with emoji language, it is clear that languages are both integral to science and creative disciplines. Working in collaboration with MFL mentors and science students recruited by [Science Made Simple](#), the project this year piloted two study/workshop days to highlight the links between disciplines. These included an international space station virtual reality activity that explored the linguistic and cultural 'space' of the space station in relation to scientific exploration. This activity was conducted in English and Russian (Runglish) and required students to problem-solve using their existing language skills. A workshop on 'Coloured Vision' explored colour as a scientific phenomenon and language which moves between cultures; this included creating and naming a new colour and exploring the meanings of colours in different cultures. Finally, pupils explored the notion of 'Hidden Meanings' by looking at different visual/picture languages, from the dead Ogham language to the use of emoji's in modern communication.

These sessions were trialled at workshops in Cardiff for 14 CSC/EAS schools and a 2-day residential stay at Lady Margaret Hall College, Oxford University. Bringing students with a science background into the team to co-create and co-deliver these workshops demonstrated the relationships between subject areas, not only for the mentees who took part in the workshops, but for the mentors and teachers. The interdisciplinary space this created forced science students and language students to think differently about their subjects, and the connections between them rapidly became visible. The open dialogue facilitated through the creation of a shared space for languages, science and creativity, had a powerful impact on engagement. One teacher commented in a post-event survey:

My pupils have engaged at a very high level with philosophical, intellectual and cultural ideas. They are animated and have been made more aware of all the things, opportunities and directions languages can offer them in their life, no matter what discipline they wish to study (Teacher participant comment, survey undertaken for post-event evaluation, March 2018).

One mentor commented that the thing that surprised her most about the interdisciplinary workshops was

[...] how a little link between space and language can change and open minds to languages and other cultures (Mentor participant comment, survey undertaken for post-event evaluation, March 2018)

Whilst one mentee commented:

I enjoyed learning how languages go into other subjects, and also asking the mentors questions about studying languages at university in an actual university setting. (Mentee participant comment, survey undertaken for post-event evaluation, March 2018)

Another commented that 'learning about how languages fit in with everything, lifestyle, culture, etc.' was the biggest thing to take away.

This approach to languages and culture has opened up further the link for language learning and higher education and the project team is looking to develop the format for further events.

Moving forward

As we enter increasingly uncertain times, there has never been greater need to impress upon young people the benefits of learning languages and having an open mind. The MFL Student Mentoring Project clearly has much to offer here as one teacher commented when reflecting on the one-day MFL workshops that:

[The event was] a huge 'gate' open to the world. Students blossomed throughout the day and their engagement grew stronger as we moved from one session to the next. The exploration of skills through the use of languages was a great success and my students are leaving thinking "languages are so much more than I thought, languages can fit in anything that we do!"

With the introduction of the new curriculum for Wales offering new possibilities for foreign languages, language learning in Wales has the opportunity to capitalise on the clear interest and appetite there is amongst local schools for MFL intervention. With 69 schools participating in the project in this year alone, the teaching community of Wales remains committed to the mission of raising aspirations and uptake of Modern Foreign Languages across the country. With the introduction of Digi-Languages, the project aims to increase its reach to more rural areas of Wales, and initial evaluation of Digi-Languages indicates a very positive response to the platform. Digi-languages displaces traditional language learning, in order to motivate students to learn languages. This apparently contradictory message is a key component of the scheme, in which we encourage mentors and mentees to explore together nuggets of new languages and cultures, providing an appetising first bite of a new culture, people or language. This motivates students to learn languages by creating an appetite for inter-cultural exchanges and for culture in and of itself, the acquisition of which motivates a student to want to commit to language learning.

Importantly, the impact of the project is clear for both mentees and mentors. Whilst mentors gain vital professional experience and have the opportunity to refine a professional skill set, mentees have a unique opportunity to develop a relationship with a university student through which they can have an open dialogue which is driven primarily by them. Every pupil deserves the opportunity to see that 'languages are so much more' than they realised, and it is the responsibility of professional linguists to share that with them by opening doors to other worlds. By providing insights into other cultures, languages and peoples, we expose mentees to a different mode of thinking. The mentors show them that there is a world of opportunities available to them through language acquisition and more than that, what that journey can look like.

Acknowledgement

The author would like to thank Claire Gorrara for her feedback and support during the drafting of this article.

Bibliography

Bierema, L.L. and J.R. Hill (2005), 'Virtual mentoring and HRD. Advances' in *Developing Human Resources*, 7(4): 556–68

Single, P. B. and C.B. Muller (2001), '[When email and mentoring unite: the implementation of a nationwide electronic mentoring program](#)' in *Creating Mentoring and Coaching Programs*, ed. L.K. Stromei (Alexandria, VA: American Society for Training and Development in Action Series), pp. 107-22

Caldwell., Brian J., Carter, Earl M. A. (2004) *The Return of the Mentor: Strategies for Workplace Learning* (Taylor and Francis e-library: London,)

Clutterbuck Associates (2009), *The Complete Handbook of Coaching 2* (SAGE Publications Limited: London,)

Coleman, J. A.; Galaczi, and L. Astruc. (2007), 'Motivation of UK school pupils towards foreign languages: a large-scale survey at Key Stage 3' in *The Language Learning Journal* 35(2): 245–81

Donaldson, G. (2015), *Successful Futures: Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales* (Cardiff: Welsh Government)

Dörnyei, Z. (2001), *Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

McCall, I. D. (2011), 'My UniSpace: applying e-mentoring to language learning' in *The Language Learning Journal*, (39:3), pp. 313-328

Murphey, T. (1998) 'Motivating with near peer role models' in *On JALT97: Trends and Transitions*, ed. B. Visgatis (Tokyo: JALT, 1998), pp. 201-5

Sproull, L. and Kiesler, S. (1991) *Connections: New Ways of Working in the Networked Organization* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991)

Tinsley, T. and Board, K. (2017) *Language Trends Wales 2016/17: The State of Language Learning in Secondary Schools in Wales* (Cardiff: British Council Wales)

Welsh Government (2014), *Qualified for life: [An Education improvement plan for 3-19 year olds in Wales](#)* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2014) [accessed 05 April 2018]

Welsh Government (2015), *[A curriculum for Wales – a curriculum for life](#)* (Cardiff: Welsh Government, 2015) [accessed 11 April 2018]

Welsh Government (2016), *[Cymraeg 2050: Million Welsh Speakers](#)* (Cardiff: Welsh Government,) [accessed 02 April 2018]

Welsh Government (2017) *[Global Futures – a plan to improve and promote modern foreign languages in Wales](#)* (Cardiff: Welsh Government) [accessed 01 March 2018]

ⁱ The Welsh Government published a National Model for Regional Working in February 2014. The model outlined the vision and arrangements for four, formally constituted, regional consortia – Central South Consortium (CSC), Education Achievement Service (EAS), Education through Regional Working (ERW), and Gwasanaeth Effeithiolrwydd Ysgolion Gogledd Cymru (GwE, North Wales School Effectiveness Service). These consortia have the task of increasing efficiency and effectiveness of schools as part of the schools improvement arrangements.