

**ANGUS COUNCIL**

**CHILDREN AND LEARNING COMMITTEE – 11 JANUARY 2022**

**ANGUS VIRTUAL SCHOOL SERVICE REVIEW**

**1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 To support school and system change in Angus, a virtual school was established in April 2018. The Angus Virtual School's (AVS) aim is to develop the capacity within schools and clusters to improve learning by supporting the development of schools as learning organisations within the context of children's services
- 1.2 Outcomes from the national governance review in 2017 and the move towards greater collaboration were key drivers for the development of AVS. Analysis of feedback from the Council's management review in 2017 also identified the themes of building capacity, ensuring improvement resource within the system, the role of innovation and how to mainstream the improvement capacity. It is the role of AVS to deliver this.
- 1.3 At its inception in 2018 a commitment was made to undertake a review to fully evaluate the role and impact of the AVS. The commitment to review the service was included in the 2020-2021 Annual Education Plan.

**2. SIGNIFICANT INFORMATION**

- 2.1 The service review process was led by Service Leader for Education and Lifelong Learning, Jim Hammond. The review process was initiated in January 2021 and draft outcomes were shared in June 2021.
- 2.2 The review team were clear that the process had to be rigorous and robust and should include a range of data including a spread of stakeholder views. As such it included a range of evaluative activities, including:
- Individual Head Teacher feedback
  - Cluster collaborative feedback
  - Individual interviews with AVS team members
  - Individual interviews with all secondary Head Teachers
  - Options Appraisal
- 2.3 Head Teachers were introduced to the review via a video presentation by Leila Martin (Head Teacher of AVS). The presentation outlined the breadth and scope of AVS work and achievements, including the GTCS Excellence in Professional Learning Award. It also highlighted AVS's contribution to regional and national work streams, including the Tayside Regional Improvement Collaborative and National Teacher Competency Framework Review Group.
- 2.4 All Angus Head Teachers were invited to complete an online survey in order to give feedback on the work of the AVS and 55% of Head Teachers responded to the survey. An overview of their responses shows:-
- 100% strongly agree or agree that AVS has developed positive relationships with HTs
  - 100% strongly agree or agree that HTs are supported well by AVS
  - 93% strongly agree or agree AVS challenge Head Teacher's in their work

- 90% strongly agree or agree AVS develops leadership capacity across schools
- 93% strongly agree or agree AVS guides and supports all aspects of the Improvement Cycle
- 83% strongly agree or agree AVS responds effectively to requests for professional learning

- 2.5 All Head Teachers who participated in the review process expressed the view that they have developed a positive relationship with AVS. The team is appreciated for the ability to respond timeously and appropriately to their needs and this has resulted in a high level of relational trust across the school system. The review has endorsed the team's vision; purpose; approach and values, in particular the non-judgemental coaching style adopted. Almost all Head Teachers feel that AVS challenge them in their work and develops leadership capacity. The team purposefully supports all aspects of the improvement cycle and responds effectively to requests for professional learning. Head Teachers recognise in the work of the AVS, the tension between meeting operational demands and the delivery of sustainable strategic improvement.
- 2.6 The review highlighted the need to revisit the support and challenge on offer to secondary schools. As a result of this one-to-one discussions were held with the review lead, Jim Hammond and AVS Head Teacher, Leila Martin, with each secondary Head Teacher. Several themes were explored including the use of progress and achievement data, the use of existing expertise within the system and building capacity and capability at all layers of the system. Actions have been agreed with schools and these actions will be evaluated as part of the on-going monitoring of the Annual Education Plan.
- 2.7 The review process provided valuable data suggesting that AVS is providing effective support to the education system in Angus. Equally it provided a range of actions that will allow the service to continue to improve and support the delivery of positive outcomes for the children and young people of Angus.

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