

## Address to Conference 2011

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ASCL Cymru Secretary

## A challenging 12 months

- Performance Statistics;
  - PISA –
  - GCSE
  - Attendance
- Transformation:
  - Reorganisation
  - 21C Schools
- Budgets
  - LA Consortia (Frontline Service Review)
  - 16-19
  - 85% delegation

## National Challenge

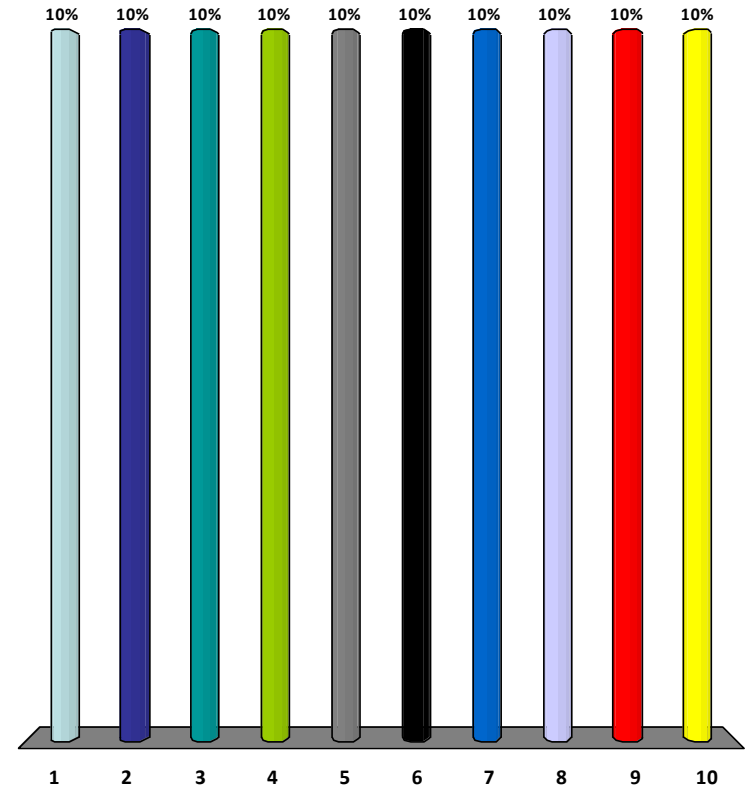
- Minister's speech (February 2011) and 20 point Action Plan detailing National Strategies such as:
  - Annual grading/banding of schools
  - Performance Management
  - National literacy/numeracy tests (2013)
  - 4 School Improvement Consortia (Sept 2102)
  - Legislation to compel compliance
- Context of variation in quality of Local Authority fulfilment of statutory duties re Education.

## National v Local

- National Strategies require all stakeholders to comply across all contexts.
- Local leadership contend with local obstacles which prevent/inhibit implementation
- Reminiscent of WW1:
  - Orders from backline- '*attack at dawn*'
  - Obstacles such as machine guns and mud;
  - Officers had to lead troops over the top or else.....!
- What are the local challenges facing school leaders in Wales?

## Local challenges:

1. School reorganisation
2. Federation and consortia working
3. School Improvement Consortia
4. Qualification change –GCSE and Vocational
5. Postcode lottery in funding levels
6. 16-19 funding
7. Learning Network arrangements
8. New Performance Management regulations
9. New Reporting Regulations
10. Parental preference in reaction to media reports on banding





## Piggy in the middle

- Minister is fully aware that school leaders are crucial to the success or otherwise of national Strategies;
- School leaders are generally in support of strategies the Minister is pushing.
- **BUT:**
  - Deciding the 'what' is easier than determining the 'how' to implement change

e.g. Data Analysis.

- The '**what**' means the first question in Estyn Inspections and Head's Perf Review is a reasonable one:
- ***In your school, what is the comparative performance of:***
  - *free meal students v non free meal?*
  - *Boys v girls?*
  - *ALN v non ALN?*
  - *EAL v non EAL?*
  - *students from each feeder school?*
  - *How each does sub group perform within each teaching group?*

The '**how**' to ensure that all school leaders can answer the question involves the establishment of the School Standards Unit and the development of the banding model.

## The tyranny of the single grade

- The statistical model determined by the SSU is reasonable ( with some concerns re data accuracy and validity) and its development has involved consultation.
- The Minister clearly states no intention to return to league tables **but** condensing a profile of performance down to single grade is just that.
- The method of norm referencing banding ( *find range of point scores and divide by 5*) means each year there will be x% of schools deemed 'failing' regardless of performance.
- The 'how' may have unintended consequences.....

## Lessons from England

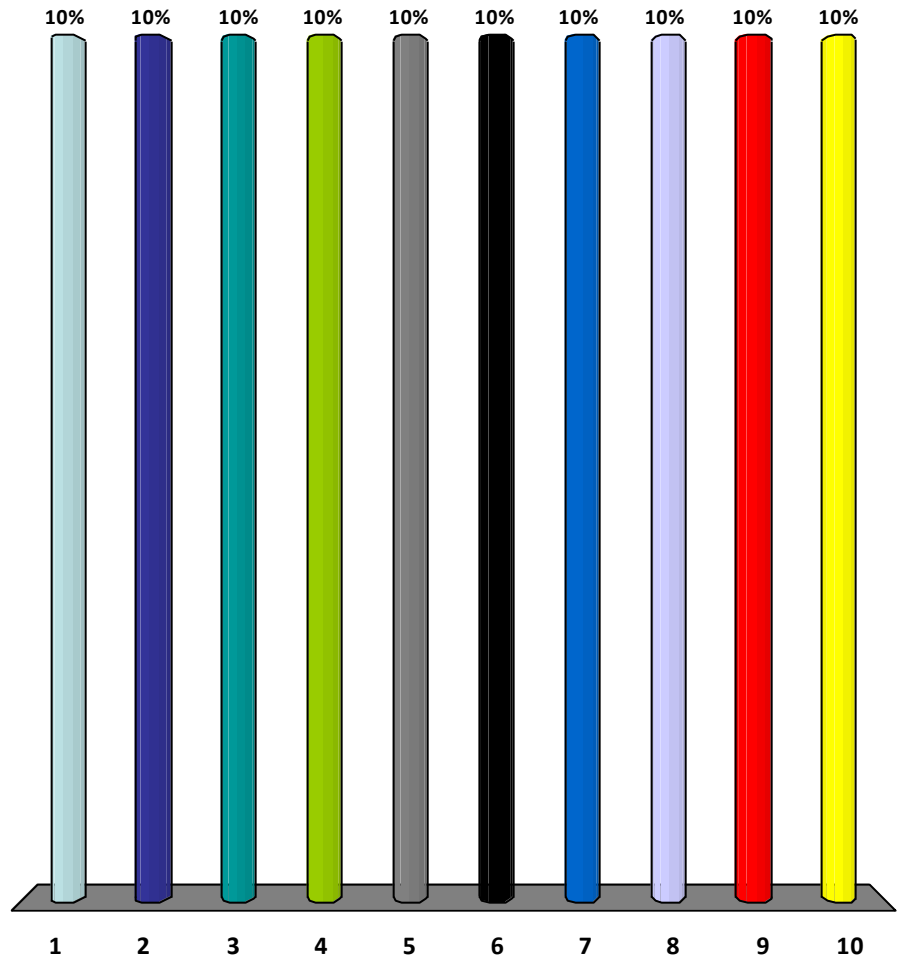
- Laboratory experience suggests the following is likely to happen in Wales over time:
  - Distortion of the curriculum plan to ‘game’ the best league table score.
    - Establish another national strategy to define the curriculum;
  - Diversion of focus from development of whole person ( education) to exam success ( training);
  - Development of ‘sink’ schools - with negative consequences for children whose parents cannot afford to exercise parental preference.
  - Sack the Manager culture – scarcity of confident leaders.

## Meeting the National Challenge

- ASCL policy line:  
**Challenge and Support must be offered in equal measure.**
- Conference delegates represent some 50% of the secondary school leaders of Wales,
  - In which area is better support most needed, apart from sufficient funding?

## What support do you need?.

1. Identifying the underperforming students
2. Identifying the underperforming staff
3. Funding for staff for intervention with individual students (pupil premium approach)
4. Resolving redundancy issues
5. Recruiting and retaining high quality staff
6. Resolving long term/frequent absences of staff
7. Resolving protracted competency/capability cases;
8. Resolving threats of industrial action
9. Access to alternative provision for some students
10. Resolving issues with individual governors.



## Meeting the Challenge- Conclusion

- National Strategies have a part to play in school improvement;
- The strategies selected by the Minister are ones that we can and do support on the whole.
- However, it is in the detail of how those strategies are being implemented that we have concerns.
- Experience of school leadership suggests that the Minister, his DfES staff and LA Directors should remember.....

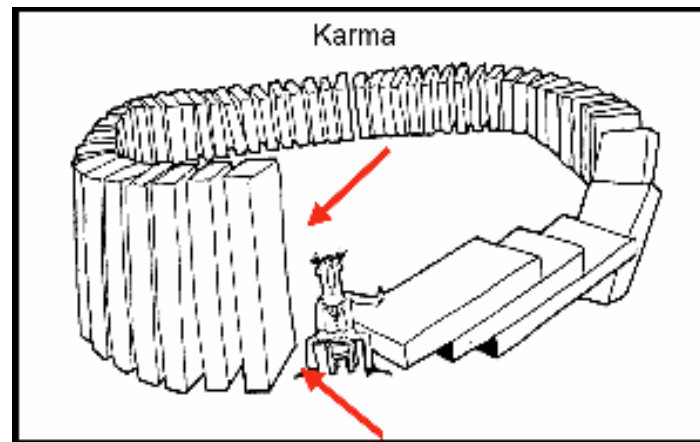
## **Good timing is everything**

- **Act in haste and repent at leisure**
- Naming and shaming of schools and/ school leaders, intentionally or by default, before the consortia support mechanisms are in place is a hasty act.



## Self Confidence

- ***takes years to develop but can be destroyed in a matter of seconds;***
- A league table and ‘sack the manager’ culture create uncertainty and threaten the confidence of leaders, whether in the classroom or the school;



A confident, self improving education service

National Strategies may set the direction of travel,  
but school leaders must be trusted to decide how  
best to get to there.....

## As Bob the Builder would say



Can you fix it?

Yes we can!

