CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL
RHONDDA CYNON TAF
COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMITTEE SUMMONS

C Hanagan
Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
2 Llys Cadwyn
Taff Street
Pontypridd
CF37 4TH

Meeting Contact: Sarah Daniel scrutiny@rctcbc.gov.uk (07385 086 169)

YOU ARE SUMMONED to a meeting of **EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** to be held virtually on **MONDAY, 22ND JANUARY, 2024** at **5.00 PM.**

Non Committee Members and Members of the public may request the facility to address the Committee at their meetings on the business listed although facilitation of this request is at the discretion of the Chair. It is kindly asked that such notification is made to Democratic Services by Thursday, 18 January 2024 on the contact details listed above, including stipulating whether the address will be in Welsh or English.

AGENDA	**Page No's**

1.   DECLARATION OF INTEREST

To receive disclosures of personal interest from Members in accordance with the Code of Conduct

Note:

1. Members are requested to identify the item number and subject matter that their interest relates to and signify the nature of the personal interest: and

2. Where Members withdraw from a meeting as a consequence of the disclosure of a prejudicial interest they must notify the Chairman when they leave.

2. MINUTES

To approve as an accurate record the minutes of the virtual meeting of the Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee held on the 14th December 2023.

REPORTS OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND COMMUNICATIONS

3. CONSULTATION LINKS

Information is provided in respect of relevant consultations for consideration by the Committee.

4. WELSH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION - STRUCTURE OF THE SCHOOL YEAR

For Members of the Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee to formally respond to the Welsh Government's consultation

OFFICER'S REPORTS

5. THE WORK OF THE CENTRAL SOUTH CONSORTIUM IN THE REGION AND RHONDDA CYNON TAF LOCAL AUTHORITY 2022 - 2023

For Committee Members to scrutinise and challenge the Annual report

6. ESTYN RECOMMENDATIONS

For Committee Members to scrutinise and challenge the update on the Estyn recommendations

7. WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN (WESP) - ANNUAL PLAN UPDATE

For Committee Members to scrutinise and challenge the Annual Work Plan

8. CHAIR'S REVIEW AND CLOSE

To reflect on the meeting and actions to be taken forward.

9. URGENT BUSINESS

To consider any items, which the Chairman, by reason of special circumstances, is of the opinion should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency.

Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication

Circulation:-

The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee (County Borough Councillor S Evans and County Borough Councillor S Emanuel respectively)

County Borough Councillors:

Councillor M Ashford, Councillor J Brencher, Councillor J Cook, Councillor J Elliott, Councillor R Evans, Councillor S Hickman, Councillor C Lisles, Councillor M Maohoub, Councillor C Preedy, Councillor J Smith, Councillor K Webb and Councillor D Wood

Co-Opted Members:-

Mr P Booth, Voting Diocesan Authorities Representative
Mr M Cleverley, Representing NASUWT and Teachers' Panel
Ms A Jones, Representing UNITE
Mr C Jones, Representing GMB
Mrs R Lydon, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative
Mr L Patterson, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative
Mr D Price, Representing UNISON
Mr M Thomas, Representing NEU
Mr M Veale, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday, 14 December 2023 at 5.00 pm.

This meeting was recorded, details of which can be accessed here

County Borough Councillors – The following Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee Councillors were present online:-

Councillor S Evans (Chair)

Councillor S Emanuel	Councillor M Ashford
Councillor J Brencher	Councillor C Lisles
Councillor M Maohoub	Councillor J Smith
Councillor D Wood	

Co-Opted Members in attendance:-

Mr P Booth, Voting Diocesan Authorities Representative
Mr M Thomas, Representing NEU
Mr M Veale, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative

Non-Committee Members

Councillor K Morgan
Councillor A Rogers

Public Speaker

Mr J Morris

Co-Opted Members in attendance:-

Mr P Booth, Voting Diocesan Authorities Representative
Mr M Thomas, Representing NEU
Mr M Veale, Voting Elected Parent / Governor Representative

Officers in attendance:-

Ms G Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services
Ms C Jones, Head of Access & Inclusion
Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Ms A Richards, Service Director for 21st Century Schools and Transformation
Ms L Howell, 21st Century School Organisation and Business Manager
Ms S Corcoran, Head of Achievement and Wellbeing for secondary and through schools in RCT
Mr D Williams, Head of Wellbeing & Attendance

33   Apologies for Absence

Apologies of absence were received from County Borough Councillors K Webb, J Elliott and J Cook.

34 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, the following declarations of interests were made pertaining to the agenda:

Agenda item 4-Pre scrutiny of a draft Cabinet Report

County Borough Councillor M Maohoub- Personal Interest - "I know the family of the public speaker Mr Morris"

County Borough Councillor A Rogers- Personal interest- "I am a Governor of Rhigos and Hirwaun Primary Schools"

Agenda item 5 – Annual School Exclusion Performance Report for the Academic Year 2022/23

Mr Veale -Personal interest-" I am a Governor at Hawthorn High School"

County Borough Councillor J Brencher – Personal Interest-" I formerly taught at Hawthorn High School"

County Borough Councillor C Lisles-Personal Interest- "I am a Governor at Hawthorn High School"

County Borough Councillor S Evans -Personal Interest – "My son's School is mentioned in the report"

Agenda item 6 – School Attendance Data

Mr Veale – Personal interest- "I am a Magistrate and sit in court on school non-attendances"

County Borough Councillor S Evans-Personal Interest-"I am Vice Chair of Governors of a School mentioned in the report"

35 MINUTES

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on the 16th C 2023 as an accurate reflection of the discussions subject to it being noted th S Emanuel's name being misspelled.

36 CONSULTATION LINKS

Members were reminded of the open consultations being run by Welsh Government (WG) which had been circulated on the 30th November which may

be of interest to members of the Education & Inclusion Scrutiny Committee.

37   PRE- SCRUTINY OF A DRAFT CABINET REPORT

The Service Director Democratic Services and Communications presented the report to Members to provide the opportunity for Committee to pre-scrutinise the recommendations of the Director of Education & Inclusion to the Council's Cabinet on the 18th December 2023, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation & Welsh Language in respect of the Proposal To Close Rhigos Primary School With Pupils transferring To Hirwaun Primary School.

Members were advised that the draft Cabinet report was identified for pre-scrutiny by the Chair of the Education & Inclusion Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Procedure rules. The Service Director highlighted that the purpose of the pre scrutiny activity is to influence and scrutinise decisions of Cabinet before they are made as 'critical friends' and he reminded the scrutiny committee that it is not the decision maker in respect of this matter.

The Service Director referred Members of the Education & Inclusion Scrutiny Committee to the recommendations set out in his report.

The Director of Education & Inclusion Services presented the draft Cabinet report which advised Members of the outcome of the recent consultation in respect of the proposal to Close Rhigos Primary School with pupils transferring to Hirwaun Primary School by no later than September 2024. The Director advised that the report is seeking Cabinet's agreement to progress the proposals to the next stage of the consultation process by issuing an appropriate Statutory Notice which will trigger the start of the Objection Period. The Director referred Members to section four of the report which outlined the outcome of the Cabinet meeting held on the 18th September 2023 when approval was given to begin a statutory process to formally consult on the proposal to close Rhigos Primary school with Pupils transferring to Hirwaun Primary School. The justifications of doing so are contained within the report and a consultation document along with the Equality impact assessment, Welsh Language impact assessment and community impact were prepared in respect of the proposal and published on the Council's website in line with the requirements of the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code.

The Director outlined the content of the consultation report which has been prepared and contains information of meetings held to discuss the proposals with copies of notes taken at these meetings, Estyn's full response to the proposal and the clarification to the response, a summary of the responses received during the consultation period and where required, the appropriate clarification to any issues raised.

The Director summarised the number of responses and petitions received in total, and outlined the arrangements for the two drop-in sessions which were

arranged in Rhigos and Hirwaun Primary School for members of the public to discuss the proposal with Officers from the Council's Directorate of Education & Inclusion Services. The Director added that all key themes to emerge from the consultation process are included in the consultation report set out at Appendix A to the report.

The Director outlined the statutory processes for the proposal if agreed and subject to the matter not being called in for consideration by Scrutiny, the Statutory Notice would be published in January 2024, and would allow for a minimum 28-day period for objections. If any objections are received during this period, an Objection Report would be prepared and the matter would be reported to a future meeting of the Cabinet for Members to consider.

In conclusion the Director of Education & Inclusion Services commented that RCTCBC has a statutory duty through its approach to the organisation and leadership arrangements of schools to maintain the efficiency and effectiveness of provision and to ensure that all schools are well placed to deliver high quality education that meets the needs of the community and makes best use of public funding.

Following conclusion of the presentation of the report the Chair invited non-committee Members, County Borough Councillor K Morgan and A Rogers who were provided the opportunity to address their concerns regarding the proposal to Committee on this item. There followed an address from the public speaker, Mr J Morris who was also provided five minutes in which to address Committee.

The Chair thanked them all for their valuable contributions and invited the Committee to give their observations and ask questions of the Officers present.

A Member sought clarification on how the proposal will align with RCTCBC's educational goals and strategies but was pleased to hear from the Director of Education & Inclusion Services that as a school reorganisation proposal, it would ensure that RCT has sustainable and viable schools for the longer term and that these align with the Local Authority's five over-arching strategic priorities (please see Strategic Plan for 2022-25) and maintain high quality teaching and learning and standards.

A Member spoke of his personal school experience transferring to a nearby, new school following the closure of his own which he considered to be the right move, one which ensured that his peers enjoyed facilities which were fit for purpose. He added that, as set out in the report, Hirwaun Primary School will offer the transferring pupils a good education.

Members raised a number of concerns regarding home to school transport arrangements and potential additional costs the Council would incur, should these proposals be adopted. In particular, a number of members felt that the draft Cabinet report was lacking information with regards to these additional costs. A number of members sought reassurance that should Cabinet support the recommendations of the report, that 'age-appropriate travel' would be a priority particularly for younger pupils who would have to travel with much older students, as they felt parents would be compelled to drive their children to school if this was not a consideration.

The Director of Education & Inclusion Services commented that the proposal is

multi-faceted and a number of issues need to be considered such as the sustainability of the school in view of the diminishing number of pupils attending the school setting, the condition of the school buildings, the increasing financial pressure on schools, that all Councils across Wales are facing. She added that some pupils have already opted to attend a Welsh Medium School and are accessing language immersion to facilitate the move. With regards to the 2.8-mile journey, the Director commented that the matter is far more complex than financial and the Council has an obligation to ensure the right schools are in the right locations and for the right reasons.

The Service Director 21st Century Schools and Transformation confirmed that age-appropriate travel would be provided for travelling pupils and also commented that the additional cost analysis regarding pupils being transported to Hirwaun Primary School would not be undertaken and known until the final numbers of those travelling is established in order to determine the most appropriate size of bus for transportation. In response to a query, the Service Director commented that the 2.8 miles would automatically receive free transport due to the legislation available on the safe routes to school.

In respect of this point, members noted the potential additional carbon footprint created by the proposals. A number of members referenced a need for Cabinet to consider these proposals in the wider context of Climate Change, and the need to encourage residents to utilise active travel more in the future. A Member noted that with the yet unknown numbers of pupils qualifying and using home to school transport, the cost savings made may be minimal versus the costs of transporting pupils to schools using a more pollutive mode of transport.

All Members were sympathetic to the concerns of parents, but a number of Members also acknowledged that allowing the number of surplus places to remain high would have a detrimental impact on the future financial viability of Rhigos Primary School and impact children's education in the future. A Member queried whether it would it be more beneficial to make the decision to transfer the pupils now and get them into a settled and steady education. A number of Members cited these reasons, as important in Cabinet's deliberations.

Some Members sought reassurance that these concerns are mitigated, where possible, and should Cabinet be minded to progress with this proposal, the authority look to put in place sufficient support for pupils and parents during transition. In addition, that the school buildings, where appropriate, are used for community benefit for after school clubs or extra circular activities.

The Service Director 21st Century Schools and Transformation commented that a community asset transfer was a feasible option and the Council would support the community to develop a sound business case should for some parts of the school building to continue to be used for the benefit of the community.

The Director of Education & Inclusion Services acknowledged that change can be anxiety provoking but added that there is a firm commitment to work with children and their families to ease the transition process for those that choose to move to Hirwaun Primary School. Likewise, the Director anticipated the pupils of Hirwaun would also welcome this opportunity having themselves moved from Penderyn and experienced a similar transition. The Director also added that

support would be provided in respect of a community asset transfer should that be taken forward by the community.

A Member queried whether or not a business case had had been considered for investment in the repair and maintenance of the current school whilst acknowledging the recent investment in a new school for Hirwaun and the capacity available. Many Members referenced the improvement facilities and learning environment provided by a modern school.

The 21st Century Schools Business and School Organisation Manager explained there were a number of options to consider within the consultation document and the option of building a school on the existing site required careful deliberation of the total cost to invest, viability of the project, justification of the total investment to Welsh Government in view of there being a brand-new school a few miles away with capacity to accept additional learners. The 21st Century Schools Business and School Organisation Manager advised that the information is contained in the consultation document with the disadvantages and benefits included.

A Member raised concern regarding the high volume of objections to the proposal particularly from the residents of Hirwaun and sought clarity on what improvements can be put in place to the access and egress to Hirwaun Primary School to ensure that it can safely accommodate further pupils who may travel by bus or by car. The Member also explored the importance of equity of access to provisions such as after school clubs and parents' evenings for those who can't access transport or where public transport may not be reliable (aligning with the anti-poverty agenda which is a priority of the Education & Inclusion Scrutiny Committee).

A Member referred to Estyn's report (which they considered an important factor) and sought a strong sense of assurance that the standards of teaching and learning in Hirwaun Primary School will be as good as that in Rhigos Primary School. In addition, it was commented that small schools do play an important role in their community and do bring benefits (as do the larger all through schools).

A member alluded to the Sustainable Community for Schools Programme and sought assurance that the Council's highways team is contacted, if the proposal is agreed, to address any issues regarding the access, egress, parking and dropped curbs in the vicinity to Hirwaun Primary School. The 21st Century Schools Business and School Organisation Manager confirmed that when the planning application for the new school in Hirwaun was submitted, a substantial amount of work was undertaken to the area and access to the school prior to the school opening. A new car park was constructed, and work was delivered under the safe routes initiative and further stages will be delivered next year to create additional safe routes to school from a greater distance to the school.

The Director of Education & Inclusion Services commented that the Estyn Inspections, which were alluded to earlier in the meeting, had taken place sometime ago, in 2019 and stressed that as with all inspections, they are undertaken at a point in time and school improvement does fluctuate. The Director commented that both schools are now in core support categories and

neither access enhanced support from Central South Consortia. Estyn's formal response noted that the proposal is likely to at least maintain the standard of education provision and outcomes for pupils in the area with no concerning information relating to either school having been brough to the attention of the Council's Education & Inclusion Service.

At the conclusion of the Committee's discussions in respect of the proposal, Members recognised the challenges that the proposal would present for individuals and the community should they be adopted by Cabinet and wished for their comments to be considered and conveyed.

It was **RESOLVED** to:

i) Scrutinise and challenge the 'draft' Cabinet report and recommendations of the Director of Education & Inclusion, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation & Welsh Language.

ii) Following Members' consideration of the draft Cabinet report, authorise the Service Director Democratic Services & Communications to facilitate and provide Committee's comments, observations and/or recommendations to the Cabinet in respect of the proposals prior to Cabinet's consideration on the 18th December 2023.

38   ANNUAL SCHOOL EXCLUSION PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2022/23

The Head of Inclusion Services presented the report to Members to provide them with an analysis of school exclusion performance for the academic year 2022/23 and a comparison of performance over the last five years where appropriate.

Members were informed that the report provides an analysis and evaluation of exclusion data over a 5-year period. Due to the fact that rates of exclusion during the pandemic were affected by significant school closures during this period,

rates of exclusion during the pandemic are not directly comparable with typical academic years, hence the inclusion of comparators with pre-Covid data in relation to specific data sets throughout the report.

Following the presentation of the report a Member asked whether the data relating to expulsions can also be linked to those pupils demonstrating poor attendance and that having this correlation may be useful to overcome attendance issues in the future. The Head of Inclusion Services confirmed that the analysis could be undertaken from this perspective to understand if there is any correlation and subsequently provided to the Education & Inclusion Scrutiny Committee in due course.

Another Member questioned whether there is any evidence of wellbeing issues affecting those children just below the point of expulsion and what factors, if any, are different in the county borough that could impact the data specific to RCT. The Member was particularly concerned about the higher rates of expulsion in RCT than other areas and the impact of the expulsions on the wellbeing of teachers and those pupils wishing to get on with their learning.

The Head of Inclusion Services commented that data relating to the wellbeing of individuals is not collated however, the team liaises with all schools on these particular issues and they are now raised more regularly. The Head of Inclusion Services referred to the support that is available in schools such as ALN support and the more nurturing support that is available to address social and emotional wellbeing issues. She referenced NurtureUK training which is an organisation dedicated to improving the social, emotional, mental health and wellbeing of children and young people with an emphasis on understanding the triggers for behaviour and the benefits of receiving data of this kind.

The Director of Education & Inclusion Services suggested that the impact of Covid on the county borough was immense with high levels of trauma as a result of the significant numbers of deaths suffered by families and communities. This, in addition to existing levels of high poverty and deprivation rates in the region, which all have an impact on wellbeing issues.

The Head of Inclusion Services advised that the overall national ranking has improved. Although there remain issues relating to social media (which is common across other local authorities) there were no underlying or unique factors contributing to the data and higher levels of expulsions.

The Head of Inclusion Services referred to grant funded additional support in place for Head teachers, teaching and non-teaching staff which offers counselling and wellbeing sessions during out of school hours and on weekends so that they can be easily accessed and they have been well received. She added that work continues in schools to review behaviour in secondary schools, including from a staff perspective and to make recommendation to ensure that every member of staff is accountable.

The Head of Inclusion Services responded to further queries, she explained the process of reinstating pupils from a permanent exclusion into a fixed term exclusion or as a result of a decision of an independent appeal panel where the decision can be reversed or overturned and the pupil should access a different school. There is also an effective EPIT (Exclusion, Prevention and Intervention Teacher) which is viewed by the Head teacher as a critical friend and who can make a different decision following a review of the information. With regards to

possible duplication of data, the Head of Inclusion Services confirmed that the through school data does pull on some data from primary and secondary schools but is reported as a discreet cohort.

The Head of Inclusion Services acknowledged that in the subsequent report to Committee (and in addition to that set out in the overview), further context would be provided around the percentage of eFSM learners being excluded. An analysis of what happens to the permanently excluded pupils would also be provided.

A Member queried whether work was continuing with those schools that have concerning data trends in the number of incidents of exclusions and whether that will demonstrate any improvements to the schools specifically mentioned in the report at 11.5. Further, whether the Local Authority will reflect and comment on the review undertaken by Welsh Government in relation to the Exclusions Guidance. The Head of Inclusion Services advised that where a school has requested specific team around the school support, the process does take time to embed and to report outcomes arising from the support. However, where progress is not being noted in a timely fashion, there is an escalation and a full behavioural review can be made with recommendations for the school to implement.

The Head of Inclusion Services commented that any outcomes from the Welsh Government review of the exclusion guidance would be provided in due course.

A Member referred to the FEO's and their importance and asked how the local authority can support schools roll out further FEO provision, which should be a priority (whilst acknowledging the financial pressures on schools). Further, a concern was raised in relation to page 101 of the report, stating that four secondary schools have declined the offer of training for the National Nurturing Schools Programme. Further information was sought in relation to the reasons for their decision and whether there are any concerns relating to the same four schools in the report. A query was raised in relation to the level of intervention awareness undertaken by the Governing Body and their level of engagement in resolving exclusion issues.

Regarding the ALN data, a Member queried whether this was the most recent data and whether the report considers pupils with ALN under the new legislation and those with IDPs. It was felt that it was important to be clear on the classification.

The Head of Inclusion Services responded to the queries and clarified that one of the four schools is receiving Team around the school support; the local authority continues to work alongside all schools to encourage engagement. Since the report was compiled, St. Johns Secondary School has achieved the accreditation for Nurture UK in addition to the one primary school which is already listed in the report. The Head of Inclusion Services acknowledged that Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda has started tranche four provision and will be receiving supportive visits which will include the School's Governing Body. It was advised that next term exclusions and attendance will be included as an agenda item for all Governing Bodies to equip them with the appropriate information so they can provide support and challenge. Where possible the Chairs of Governors are encouraged to become involved and where there is concerning data support will be provided to the schools, setting specific targets for those schools. In conclusion, the Head of Inclusion Services confirmed that in the

Spring term, the Chairs of Governors will also receive a presentation around the roles and responsibilities of School leaders and accountability.

Before concluding the discussion, the Head of Inclusion Services confirmed that the SEN and the ALN data are both included within the report.

It was **RESOLVED** to:

(i) Scrutinise and comment on the information contained within this report; and

(ii) To receive the report at the next appropriate meeting to include further context on the percentage of eFSM learners being excluded, an analysis of both the permanently excluded pupils and the correlation between expulsions and attendance.

39   SCHOOL ATTENDANCE DATA

The Head of Attendance and Wellbeing presented the report to Members with an update on school attendance data across the local authority and the actions of the Attendance and Wellbeing Service and wider Education and Inclusion Services to increase attendance levels.

A Member noted that as with the previous report presented to Members, this one lacked the same level of detail and requested that this is considered for the subsequent meeting and also whether the next report could include local variances relating to attendance which would be helpful to Members. In addition, a query was raised in relation to paragraph 4.1 and whether Summer 2 statistics are available at secondary phase as this term is traditionally known as the worst school term for attendance.

The Head of Attendance & Wellbeing advised that half termly reports are published and circulated to every school which include comparative data, which can be requested by Governors should they wish to view it. This report was shared with Scrutiny following the previous report on attendance earlier in the year. However, in line with the Estyn framework, it is not the role of the LA to compare schools' performance against other schools. The Head of Attendance & Wellbeing explained the difficulties collecting an overall LA performance target; however, he was able to confirm the indicative figures as 91.8% for primary and 89.4% at secondary level. He added that there are no national figures for the last half term for secondary schools (primary was provided) as the national data collection by Welsh Government takes place at the end of May. Summer 2 data collection would include anomalies, with year 11 absent following their exams. Despite this anomaly and the drop off in attendance figures, the Head of Attendance & Wellbeing was happy to provide the data as Members pointed out that education covers six half terms and attendance should also be tracked across this period. It was agreed that this would be a clear action for the next report.

Another Member asked whether it was possible to include a clear summary of the key salient issues from the Attendance Monitoring Report and commented that this additional information would help the committee understand the real challenges and requested further detail around the section within the report outlining truancy, to understand how it is being addressed and if the advertising

campaign had been undertaken as yet.

The Head of Attendance & Wellbeing explained that work is currently being undertaken with two advertising companies, one for primary schools using the character 'Super Attender' which had previously been used in schools as a physical costume. This had been a challenging concept, so the local authority is looking at a social media campaign and videos for use within schools. For the secondary level, the videos will concentrate on barriers to overcome attendance, filming the videos in schools and gathering case studies that can be shared. He concluded that this fits in with the strategy, with a progress report provided to Members next March, which will be a year since the previous report which had given sufficient time for feedback and updates to be gathered.

With regards to FPN's, a query was raised as to whether there is any clear repetition of issues and children that demonstrate repeat attendance issues within a certain period of time or whether the fixed penalty notices deter this behavior and address attendance issues. Clarification was sought on whether the 207 FPN's referred to in the report include any unauthorised holidays and if the link contained within the report to the new Welsh Government Guidance was that to the 'easy read' version. A Member welcomed any further good advice from the guidance.

The Head of Attendance & Wellbeing advised that the nature of absences by code can be included in the next report. He explained that the highest coding is illness with further codes such as 'C' code which stands for 'other authorised circumstances absence' and 'O' code which means 'other unauthorised circumstances absence.' There is no reason provided to the local authority for these codes but simply that they fall under the Welsh Government definition for these attendance codes. Schools SIMS would hold individual reasons for coding e.g. bereavement, failure of parents to provide a reason for absence etc. However, the Head of Attendance & Wellbeing explained that information on the open cases to AWS could be presented to Committee which may prove useful as they provide the reasons behind the visits the local authority may undertake, such as mental health issues, no response to the school or lack of communication.

The Head of Attendance & Wellbeing referred to the 466 FPN's which were *'not issued after the warning due to improved attendance'* as they had undergone a 3-week monitoring period and had not progressed into a full FPN. He explained that there is a cohort of return/repeat pupils with a 20-25% cohort of absences due to holiday fixed penalty notices which tends to be from secondary schools. A Scrutiny Working Group, which convened to consider FPN's, provided data that demonstrated a 50% success rate, where attendance improved due to the FPN's but 50% declined/stayed the same and the evidence showed that they had some impact but not in all cases, whereas the monitoring notice had a more effective impact.

The Head of Attendance & Wellbeing responded to further queries and advised

that four truancy operations had been undertaken in total last year, working alongside the British Transport Police or SWP to patrol, identify truants and return them to school. He added that children missing in education referral forms are now available online to complete with improvements made to the webpages. The Head of Attendance & Wellbeing commented that further areas are being developed to provide an information system for members of the public to access as currently correspondence from the public is limited to one or two per month.

In response to a query regarding the EBSA report, the Head of Wellbeing and Attendance confirmed that it had been circulated earlier with the half termly report. This was an area they were looking to develop as part of the strategy and piloting EBSA forums as a multi-agency forum, to include the ALNCco, attendance lead, the educational psychologist and youth service, considering those pupils who experience school avoidance from an emotionally based perspective. He also referred to targeted support officers, who are employed through the Welsh Government grants and working alongside cohorts of learners who are just above the AWS threshold, using workbooks for 6 weeks to set out the importance of attendance and highlighting the links with attainment and future career goals. He added that the Green Light project in secondary schools has been extended via the Welsh Government grant until August.

A Member requested further data concentrating on the links between attendance and exclusion at the school level and whether these should be considered in one report as currently they are reported separately. The Head of Wellbeing & Attendance replied that data, and in particular cross referencing the attendance and exclusion data, is already being considered in house and forms part of the team around the school approach where attendance and exclusion issues are a key factor with joint visits to schools. Another area where schools are challenged is where the exclusion rates have decreased but so has attendance, potentially where schools are no longer excluding because the children are no longer attending.

The Chair summarised the discussions and suggested that in subsequent reports a number of best practice examples are included to evidence those areas where interventions and attendance initiatives are in place, which would provide valuable information to Committee. Likewise, that the best practice examples are shared with schools and evidence of how this is being rolled out is also evidenced in future reports so that the best practice can be shared and replicated.

The Head of Wellbeing & Attendance referred to two best practice case studies available on the Welsh Government website. He added that best practice examples are regularly shared with Wellbeing and Attendance officers and via Head Teacher forums. He recounted a recent wellbeing attendance event noted in 5.5 of the report which over 80 schools attended which includes presentations from an RCT schools and a presentation from a school in Bridgend following their successful Estyn report.

Following discussions, it was **RESOLVED** to:

(i) Scrutinise and comment on the information contained within the report; and

(ii) To receive the report at the next appropriate meeting to include further data and good practice examples as requested by the Committee.

This meeting closed at 7.35 pm   **Cllr S Evans**
                                                                                              Chair

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg / This document is also available in Welsh

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2023/24

EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

22 JANUARY 2024

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, DEMOCRATIC SERVICES & COMMUNICATIONS

WELSH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION – STRUCTURE OF THE SCHOOL YEAR

1.   **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1   For Members of the Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee to formally respond to the Welsh Government's consultation which sets out the proposals on the principle of modifying the school year, options for implementing changes to the school year including being made in the 2025 to 2026 school year and suggested term dates for 2025 to 2026 school year

2.   **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Members: -

2.1   Provide feedback on the proposals as outlined in paragraph 4, and decide whether they wish to make any further comments or suggestions as appropriate following consideration of the information before them.

2.2   Authorise the Service Director Democratic Services and Communications to submit the feedback provided by Members to Welsh Government on behalf of the Committee

3.   **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1.   To provide Scrutiny with the opportunity to respond to the consultation so that it can have its say on the proposals which set out a number of objectives as set out below.

4.   **BACKGROUND**

4.1   The current consultation seeks Members views on a number of specific modifications (or changes) to the school calendar. Welsh Government are proposing working with relevant bodies to reframe the traditional parameters of the school calendar to create more consistent term-lengths and increase some half-term breaks so that each half-term is broadly the same length.

4.2   The total number of days provided for learning, breaks, and staff training will not change. The proposals seek to maintain the existing provision of 190 days/380 sessions (38 weeks) of learning, 13 weeks of school breaks, and the existing number of staff training (INSET) days per school year. Similarly, all public holidays will remain.

4.3   It is proposed that implementation would begin in the 2025 to 2026 school year. These changes would include the following:

- Extending the October half-term break to two weeks and shortening the summer break by one week.
- The flexibility to de-couple the spring break from the Easter public holiday. Recognising the importance of Easter to many people, it is important to note that should Easter fall outside of the school break, the public holidays would still apply, and learning time should be re-distributed, for example, schools would be closed on Good Friday and Easter Monday. Broadly, Easter and Holy Week will stand outside the spring break for two years in every 10-year period.

4.4   While an approach to the school calendar which has more equal term dates is being proposed, there would remain room for some flexibility in response to particular needs. For example, there may be local, cultural, one off or national events which may necessitate a change to the normal pattern.

4.5   Welsh Government are also seeking views on further potential changes which could be introduced at a later date. These would include the following:

- Providing the flexibility to extend the May half-term break and/or if necessary, moving the break away from the public holiday with an associated shortening of the summer break by one week.
- Moving GCSE results day to the same week as AS/A-level results day. This could have benefits, particularly for secondary school staff. These benefits include 'freeing up' more weeks within the break to offset a shortened summer break.

4.6   Attached at Appendix A is a proposed set of questions of areas where Welsh Government are seeking feedback. Members can find a full list of the proposals attached at Appendix B to the report.

5.   <u>**EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**</u>

5.1   There are no equality and diversity implications as a result of the recommendations set out in the report.

6.   FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1   There are no financial implications aligned to this report.

7.   LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

7.1   There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

8.   LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES.

8.1   This is an information report presenting the Welsh Government's consultation on its proposals on the structure of the school year. No decisions are being taken in this report.

9.   CONCLUSION

9.1   The Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee, in line with its Terms of Reference, has been afforded the opportunity to respond to the consultation for the structure of the school year, published by Welsh Government

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EDUCATION & INCLUSION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

22 JANUARY 2024

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, DEMOCRATIC SERVICES &

COMMUNICATION

Consultation questions – Structure of the School Year

1. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the school calendar could be better designed to support the way we live, learn and work today?
2. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the school calendar could be better designed to support socio-economically disadvantaged learners?
3. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the school calendar could be better designed to support learners with Additional Learning Needs (ALN)?
4. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the school calendar could be better designed to support teacher and/or learner well-being and ease fatigue?
5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with an additional break week (taken from the summer break), dividing the longest term (autumn)?
6. To what extent do you agree or disagree with having the flexibility to de-couple (separate) the spring break from the Easter public holiday?
7. To what extent do you agree or disagree with an additional break week in May or June (taken from the summer break and added to the existing May break), to even term lengths?
8. To what extent do you agree or disagree with holding A level, AS level and GCSE results days in the same week?
(Currently examination results are distributed on the third and fourth Thursday in August respectively. Aligning results days would mean that WJEC GCSE results be moved forward to the same week as A level and AS level results.)
9. To what extent do you agree or disagree with Option 1: Maintaining the existing school calendar?
10. To what extent do you agree or disagree with Option 2 and the proposed draft direction: a school calendar with a two-week October break, a spring break at broadly the same time each year (despite when Easter falls), and a five-week summer break?
11. To what extent do you agree or disagree with Option 3: a school calendar with a two-week October break, a spring break at broadly the same time each year (despite when Easter falls), a two-week May break, and a four-week summer break?
12. For 2025 to 2026, do you agree or disagree with the proposed term dates as set out for Options 2 and 3?
13. What, in your opinion, would be the likely effects of the proposals on the Welsh language? We are particularly interested in any likely effects on opportunities to use the Welsh language and on not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English
Do you think that there are opportunities to promote any positive effects?
Do you think that there are opportunities to mitigate any adverse effects?
14. In your opinion, could the proposals be formulated or changed so as to:
have positive effects or more positive effects on using the Welsh language and on not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English; or
mitigate any negative effects on using the Welsh language and on not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English?
15. We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them

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PUBLICATION, DOCUMENT

The Structure of the School Year

We want your views on proposals to amend school term dates. So that terms are more equal in length, with more evenly distributed breaks, for maintained schools in Wales.

First published: 21 November 2023

Last updated: 21 November 2023

Contents

Overview

The Programme for Government and Co-operation Agreement sets out the Welsh Government's commitment to consider the school year to help tackle disadvantage and support well-being, in order to benefit learners, staff, and parents. This is part of the Welsh Government's **national mission** to achieve high standards and aspirations for all by tackling the impact of poverty on educational attainment to support every learner.

In 2023, we follow broadly the same school term structure or "school calendar" as was followed in 1873, despite living, learning and working in a very different world today compared to 150 years ago. We want the school calendar to be better aligned with life in the 21st century and help us to address disadvantage, reduce educational inequalities and support learner and staff well-being.

We are asking for your views on three matters:

- (a) The principle of modifying the school year.
- (b) Options for implementing any modification of the school year including some changes being made in 2025 to 2026.
- (c) Suggested term dates for 2025 to 2026 school year implementation.

This consultation is complementary to the many recent changes and progressive improvements we have made to education in Wales. We have a new Curriculum for Wales, there is greater emphasis on professional learning for teachers, we have new ways of supporting learners with additional learning needs, and, in the coming years, we will be introducing 'Made-for-Wales' qualifications aligned with the ambitions of the new Curriculum for Wales.

In this consultation, we are seeking your views on a number of specific modifications (or changes) to the school calendar. We are proposing working with relevant bodies to reframe the traditional parameters of the school calendar

to create more consistent term-lengths and increase some half-term breaks so that each half-term is broadly the same length. Specific consultation questions are set out at the end of this document.

The total number of days provided for learning, breaks, and staff training will not change. We will maintain the existing provision of 190 days/380 sessions (38 weeks) of learning, 13 weeks of school breaks, and the existing number of staff training (INSET) days per school year[Footnote 1]. Similarly, all public holidays will remain.

The current structure of the school year

The school year in Wales begins in September and ends in July.

The structure of the school calendar is not set out in legislation and there is no stipulated way of distributing the 13 weeks of school breaks.

School terms

The current school calendar typically has a longer autumn term compared with shorter spring and summer terms. These terms are punctuated with 13 weeks of breaks which vary in length.

School breaks

The current school calendar typically has a one-week break dividing each term into half-terms (referred to as the "half-term break"), a two-week break at the end of the autumn and spring terms (that currently coincide with Christmas and Easter, respectively) and roughly a six-week break at the end of the summer

term.

Differences across Wales

A pattern of structuring the school calendar, as described, has emerged over the last 150 years. However, because the school calendar is not set out in legislation, term dates are not always the same across the UK or across Wales. The law states that local authorities and school governing bodies must work together to try to keep term dates as consistent as possible, but there are small local differences.

This is how the current school calendar looks:

Option 1	Autumn Term				End of Term 1	Spring Term			End of Term 2	Summer Term				End of Term 3
Breaks		1			2		1		2		1		6	
	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec		Jan	Feb	Mar		Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug

Autumn term (September to December)

- Half-term break: 1 week (in October/November)
- End of term break: 2 weeks (in December/January)

Spring term (January to March/April)

- Half-term break: 1 week (in February)
- End of term break: 2 weeks (in March/April at the same time as Easter)

Summer term (April to July)

- Half-term break: 1 week (in May/June)
- End of term break: 6 weeks (in July/August)

Why change the school year

In Wales, children's rights are at the heart of everything we do, which is why we want to ensure that the school calendar is built around learners and education first. The Welsh Government is considering changing the structure of the school calendar for several reasons.

This is an opportunity to design a calendar intentionally to better support learners, education systems, and families.

The current school calendar has uneven term lengths with a longer autumn and shorter spring and summer terms. The length of each term and associated half-terms is not intentional, term dates have traditionally been determined by the placement of public holidays, such as Christmas and Easter. For example, Easter Sunday does not fall on a fixed date each year.

Reason 1: A changed school calendar to better support the needs of disadvantaged learners and their families

It is essential to consider how we structure learning and teaching so that high standards and aspirations are achieved for all learners, particularly for learners with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and socio-economically disadvantaged learners.

When exploring the impacts of the current school calendar, these learners were found to be most affected by the structure; similarly, they also have the most to gain from a new structure[Footnote 2].

Research suggests there is a relationship between the structure of the school calendar and the well-being and educational achievement of learners. For example, learning loss which refers to learners falling behind academically during school breaks, is more prevalent during the summer break compared to other breaks, as summer is longer than other school break periods[Footnote 3].

Time then has to be devoted, during the autumn term, to recover the ground lost rather than advancing learning. However, this recovery can take longer for learners with ALN and those who are socio-economically disadvantaged. Additionally, for learners with ALN, learning loss and disruptions to routine are significant changes, and the school calendar is one contributory factor in this[Footnote 4]. As a consequence, the length of the summer break could contribute to the attainment gap between socio-economically disadvantaged learners and their peers.

As well as this, for low-income families, school breaks can exacerbate existing financial pressures and food insecurity, putting pressure on families as well as learners themselves[Footnote 5].

The summer break can be a positive experience for learners who are able to participate in activities that extends learning and promotes social and emotional skills. However, we recognise that other learners are not afforded the same opportunities which can contributes to an attainment gap. Additionally, significant numbers of parents perceive that a six-week summer break is too long, citing boredom, less physical activity and risk of isolation over the break[Footnote 6].

Reason 2: A changed school calendar to better support the well-being of learners and teachers and reduce fatigue

If terms are too long without a sufficient break, fatigue can negatively impact the amount of teaching, learning and engagement taking place in classrooms. This is particularly true during the autumn which is the longest term with the most teaching weeks[Footnote 7]. School staff are more likely to be impacted by instances of fatigue and illness during longer half-terms, and teachers often work through much of the one-week break in autumn[Footnote 8] which can contribute to fatigue. Whilst the length of the autumn term presents an opportunity to cover large amounts of curriculum content, there is little opportunity for rest, leading to fatigue[Footnote 9]. Learners similarly suffer a sense of fatigue by the end of long terms, with effects particularly notable for neurodivergent learners and those who travel long distances to school[Footnote 10].

Consequently, term length can impact the quality of learning and teaching and potentially impact of learning experiences. When there are comparatively fewer teaching weeks in a term, teachers have less time to cover curriculum content and learners have less time for curriculum exploration.

We recognise the importance of school breaks in allowing learners and the education workforce time for recreation and rest. A changed school calendar would still provide opportunities for children and young people to rest and potentially to benefit from the experiences that play schemes and extracurricular camps offer during breaks from school.

More generally, impacts stemming from the summer break include instances of boredom, isolation[Footnote 11], lack of routine and support, and less focus on well-being and physical activity. Additionally, the summer break, as the longest break from school, presents the biggest safeguarding concern as learners are without face-to-face professional support from schools for six weeks or longer.

At the same time, a one-week break during the longer autumn term may not be sufficiently long for learners and teachers to rest and recuperate. Understanding whether school breaks could be redistributed to better support learner and teacher well-being is crucial, and gathering public input on this point is one underlying reason for this consultation.

Reason 3: A changed school calendar to better support learning and teaching

Term lengths that vary considerably can have a negative impact on learners and the education workforce. As stated, variations in term length mean that teachers are faced with unequal lengths of time to cover curriculum content and learners are presented with an 'uneven playing field' from one year to the next, meaning that one year there would be additional weeks to teach and learn a topic than in other years. The inconsistency of spring and summer term lengths can also impact revision for those learners in exam years[Footnote 12].

More equal term lengths, on the other hand, could have a real and practical benefit for both teachers and learners. Terms of equal length promote consistent opportunities for curriculum exploration across the year while also offering flexibility to teachers regarding the point in the school year when topics/modules are taught based on what is right for learners rather than being based on term length constraints. Research suggests that some teachers report that they plan content delivery in blocks and struggle to effectively fit blocks of teaching into particularly short terms of five weeks or fewer[Footnote 13].

Redistributing break periods so that terms are more equal in length could help schools plan curriculum delivery with even greater focus on improving learner progression and attainment.

There is evidence to suggest that the distribution and placement of breaks can have an impact on learner progression and attainment. Variations of term

lengths can have a negative impact on learners. This is a particular concern in the longer autumn term (when learners become fatigued) and when Easter falls later on in spring, resulting in less time in school immediately prior to external examinations.

Learners at Welsh medium schools who speak little-to-no Welsh at home, for example, have been found to struggle with learning loss over the six-week summer break. Time then has to be devoted upon return to school in the autumn to recover learning which had already been achieved at the end of the previous term[Footnote 14]. Though most learning is recovered in autumn upon return to school[Footnote 15], this does of course come at the cost of time to advance learning. The same issue is true for learners in English medium schools who speak little-to-no English at home[Footnote 16].

Reason 4: A changed school calendar to better support modern patterns of living and working

The way we live and work, has changed vastly over recent decades and will likely continue to change further. However, the school calendar has remained the same. Patterns and rates of employment have altered[Footnote 17], meaning that more women work outside the home than in the past and people are living and working until older in age. With extended families often living farther apart, grandparents more likely to be in formal employment, and families less likely to have a parent or carer that remains in the home[Footnote 18], childcare during school breaks can be very challenging for families.

The average number of annual leave days for those in full time employment is 28, equivalent to 5.6 weeks. The shortfall between average annual leave entitlement and the 13 weeks of school breaks may mean that working parents or carers need to source childcare for around seven weeks across the year. Many families rely on formal childcare. However, during school breaks, families can be under pressure in terms of increased living costs, including the need to

find and fund longer provision of childcare to enable them to continue in their work or study[Footnote 19]. While redistributing breaks does not remove the need for childcare for 13 weeks of the year, more evenly distributed breaks could allow families to better plan informal childcare or be better able to budget for the cost of formal childcare.

The Welsh Government understands that when looking at the structure of the school year, consideration must be given to the subsequent impact the school calendar has on other sectors including tourism and hospitality, transport, childcare and play, the voluntary and public sectors (including the NHS and social care), as well as groups with protected characteristics. Engagement has already been undertaken with representatives from these groups to establish views around the school calendar, and this engagement will continue throughout the consultation.

What change would look like

In taking forward our wider education policies and reforms, it is important to understand that the school calendar can help support learners, families and the education workforce in terms of addressing disadvantage, supporting learning and well-being, and reflecting how we live and work now.

We want to modernise the school calendar to achieve a more balanced structure throughout Wales. We are proposing a different distribution of breaks throughout the year to achieve more consistent term-lengths.

Any changes we make, are intended to bring about the following potential benefits:

Terms of more equal length

Would promote a more stable rhythm for continuous learning with regular down time, enabling better spaced recuperation opportunities for both teachers and learners. It could support learners to make more sustained progress by affording opportunity to consolidate and build on learning over time, giving schools more opportunity to plan progression consistently and utilise all terms fully.

The redistribution of break periods

To reduce fatigue throughout the year. Redistributed breaks to help manage workload may also support educational outcomes; if teachers are less fatigued, they may be better equipped to plan and teach, and similarly, well rested learners may be better able to learn. Similarly, allocating breaks to different times of the year may present more affordable opportunities for travel and leisure.

A reduction in the length of the summer break

By redistributing some of this time so that breaks are spread more evenly throughout the year. This could help to reduce the impact of learning loss over the summer break and ensure school time is used rather than for learning recovery, to advance learning to improve education outcomes, close the attainment gap, and better align the school calendar with modern living, learning and working patterns. The summer break currently uses six out of the 13-weeks of school breaks a year.

What specific changes are we proposing

These changes are outlined in the options below and it is proposed that implementation would begin in the 2025 to 2026 school year. These changes would include the following:

- Extending the October half-term break to two weeks and shortening the summer break by one week.
- The flexibility to de-couple the spring break from the Easter public holiday.We recognise the importance of Easter to many people, and it is important to note that should Easter fall outside of the school break, the public holidays would still apply, and learning time should be re-distributed, for example, schools would be closed on Good Friday and Easter Monday. Broadly, Easter and Holy Week will stand outside the spring break for two years in every 10-year period.

While an approach to the school calendar which has more equal term dates is being proposed, there would remain room for some flexibility in response to particular needs. For example, there may be local, cultural, one off or national events which may necessitate a change to the normal pattern.

What other proposals are we considering implementing later on

We are also seeking views on further potential changes which could be introduced at a later date. These would include the following:

- Providing the flexibility to extend the May half-term break and/or if necessary, moving the break away from the public holiday with an associated shortening of the summer break by one week.

- Moving GCSE results day to the same week as AS/A-level results day.

This could have benefits, particularly for secondary school staff. These benefits include 'freeing up' more weeks within the break to offset a shortened summer break. if GCSE results day were to occur in the third week of August in the same week as AS/A-Level results[Footnote 20].

What changes have we ruled out

Through stakeholder engagement, evidence and research we have considered various alternative school calendar options that could help us to achieve the ambitions of a more equal distribution of learning weeks.

From this, we have ruled out several alternative options. For example, we do not intend to propose an option in which the school year would begin in January and end in December. We have also ruled out options with a longer Christmas break, and any with less than a four-week summer break.

We will retain the same number of schools days as present, but the proposal is to redistribute those more evenly over the school year. In light of that, we do not consider that the proposal would necessitate a change to School Teachers' Pay[Footnote 21] and Conditions or to the Burgundy Book[Footnote 22].

Suggested changes

To achieve a more equitable school calendar that is designed to support educational outcomes for all, well-being, and modern life, we therefore propose a new school calendar for all maintained schools in Wales. All options retain the flexibility or sometimes require the use of half-weeks to ensure 190 days of

provision are met.

The following tables and descriptions are approximations for illustrative purposes only and are not intended to show exact dates.

Option 1: The existing school calendar (Status Quo)

The current structure consists of a one-week break in October, two-week Christmas break, one-week break in February, two-week break for Easter, one-week break in May and a six-week summer break.

Option 1	Autumn Term				End of Term 1	Spring Term			End of Term 2	Summer Term				End of Term 3
Breaks			1		2		1		2			1		6
	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec		Jan	Feb	Mar		Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug

Autumn term (September to December)

- Half-term break: 1 week (in October/November)
- End of term break: 2 weeks (in December/January)

Spring term (January to March/April)

- Half-term break: 1 week (in February)
- End of term break: 2 weeks (in March/April at the same time as Easter)

Summer term (April to July)

- Half-term break: 1 week (in May/June)
- End of term break: 6 weeks (in July/August)

Option 2: A new school calendar ("New Option") from 2025 to 2026

In this option, we propose a school calendar with a two-week October break, the flexibility to de-couple the spring ("Easter") break from Easter, and a five-week summer break to be introduced from the 2025 to 2026 school year.

*The February, Christmas and May breaks would not change in this option.

Option 2 (from 2025/26)	Autumn Term				End of Term 1	Spring Term			End of Term 2	Summer Term				End of Term 3
Breaks		2			2			1	2			1		5
	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec		Jan	Feb	Mar		Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug

	Option 2 changes

Autumn term (September to December)

- Half-term break: 2 weeks (in October/November)
- End of term break: 2 weeks (in December/January)

Spring term (January to March/April)

- Half-term break: 1 week (in February)
- End of term break: 2 weeks (in March/April which could be de-coupled from Easter)

Summer term (April to July)

- Half-term break: 1 week (in May/June)
- End of term break: 5 weeks (in July/August)

Option 3: A New School Calendar ("New Option Plus") in the future

This option for a new school calendar would be rolled out in two phases.

Option 3 Phase 1

Phase 1 would be implemented from the 2025 to 2026 school year and would be the same as Option 2. In this phase, we propose a school calendar with a two-week October break, the flexibility to de-couple the spring ("Easter") break from Easter public holiday, and a five-week summer break.

Option 3 Phase 2

In addition to the changes in Phase 1, we propose additional changes to the school calendar following implementation of Phase 1 changes. These additional changes include a two-week May break and a four-week summer break. Further

changes could also include AS/A level and GCSE results days held in the same week.

*The February and Christmas breaks would not change in either phase of this option.

Option 3 Phase 1	Autumn Term				End of Term 1	Spring Term			End of Term 2	Summer Term				End of Term 3
Breaks		2			2			1	2			1		5
	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec		Jan	Feb	Mar		Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug

Autumn term (September to December)

- Half-term break: 2 weeks (in October/November)
- End of term break: 2 weeks (in December/January)

Spring term (January to March/April)

- Half-term break: 1 week (in February)
- End of term break: 2 weeks (in March/April which could be de-coupled from Easter)

Summer term (April to July)

- Half-term break: 1 week (in May/June)
- End of term break: 5 weeks (in July/August)

Option 3 Phase 2	Autumn Term				End of Term 1	Spring Term			End of Term 2	Summer Term				End of Term 3
Breaks		2			2			1	2		2			4
	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug		

(yellow)	Option 3 phase 1 changes (the same as Option 2)
(red)	Option 3 phase 2 changes

Autumn term (September to December)

- Half-term break: 2 weeks (in October/November)
- End of term break: 2 weeks (in December/January)

Spring term (January to March/April)

- Half-term break: 1 week (in February)
- End of term break: 2 weeks (in March/April which could be de-coupled from Easter)

Summer term (April to July)

- Half-term break: 2 weeks (in May/June)
- End of term break: 4 weeks (in July/August)

Next steps

The consultation exercise will run from 21 November 2023 until 12 February

2024. Welsh Ministers will then consider the findings and make a decision on the school calendar for future years with a view to commence some changes in 2025 to 2026.

We recognise any changes to the school calendar will impact learners, families, schools, and wider society. As such, significant preparation time will be given ahead of any changes so all stakeholders can plan and adjust accordingly. Similarly, we would look to implement any changes in line with Made-for-Wales qualifications.

Proposed term dates for the 2025 to 2026 school year

Should option 2 or 3 of the above be supported, we propose the following term dates for the 2025 to 2026 school year.

Proposed term dates for the 2025 to 2026 school year

Period	Start	End (For the purposes of this document if a term ends on a public holiday it is included as part of the term.)
Autumn term 2025	Monday 1 September	Friday 19 December
Autumn Half Term 2025	Monday 20 October	Friday 31 October
Spring Term 2026	Monday 5 January	Friday 3 April

Period	Start	End (For the purposes of this document if a term ends on a public holiday it is included as part of the term.)
Spring Half Term 2026	Monday 16 February	Friday 20 February
Summer Term 2026	Monday 20 April	Wednesday 29 July
Summer Half Term 2026	Monday 25 May	Friday 29 May

These term days achieve a school calendar with:

- 190 learning days (five days of the above option will be used as INSET days to be decided by relevant bodies at a local level).
- A two-week October break with an associated five-week summer break.
- A spring break that is de-coupled from Easter to achieve more equal term lengths.
- All other breaks remain at the same point and the length as the current system.

We are seeking your views on these specific dates as part of the consultation questionnaire.

In the event that a decision is made to proceed with any changes to the school year for the 2025 to 2026 school year then it would be necessary for the Minister for Education and Welsh Language to issue a direction pursuant to section 32B Education Act 2002. A draft direction based on proposals for option 2 and option 3 phase 1 are set out at Annex A.

From the 2026 to 2027 school year, the relevant bodies who are normally responsible for setting term dates would retain responsibility and liaise with the Welsh Government to decide term dates taking into account the outcome of this consultation.

Consultation Questions

Select all that apply to you from the below:

- Age 17 years and under
- Age 18 years and older
- Education workforce
- Tourism sector
- Childcare sector
- Full-time work - please specify
- Part-time work - please specify
- Parent or carer (The term 'parent' has been used as a shorthand to include mothers, fathers, foster carers, adoptive parents, stepparents, 'kinship' parents and grandparents, guardians)
- Other

1. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the school calendar could be better designed to support the way we live, learn and work today?
2. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the school calendar could be better designed to support socio-economically disadvantaged learners?
3. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the school calendar could be better designed to support learners with Additional Learning Needs (ALN)?
4. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the school calendar could be better designed to support teacher and/or learner well-being and ease fatigue?
5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with an additional break week

(taken from the summer break), dividing the longest term (autumn)?

6. To what extent do you agree or disagree with having the flexibility to de-couple (separate) the spring break from the Easter public holiday?

7. To what extent do you agree or disagree with an additional break week in May or June (taken from the summer break and added to the existing May break), to even term lengths?

8. To what extent do you agree or disagree with holding A level, AS level and GCSE results days in the same week?
(Currently examination results are distributed on the third and fourth Thursday in August respectively. Aligning results days would mean that WJEC GCSE results be moved forward to the same week as A level and AS level results.)

9. To what extent do you agree or disagree with Option 1: Maintaining the existing school calendar?

10. To what extent do you agree or disagree with Option 2 and the proposed draft direction: a school calendar with a two-week October break, a spring break at broadly the same time each year (despite when Easter falls), and a five-week summer break?

11. To what extent do you agree or disagree with Option 3: a school calendar with a two-week October break, a spring break at broadly the same time each year (despite when Easter falls), a two-week May break, and a four-week summer break?

12. For 2025 to 2026, do you agree or disagree with the proposed term dates as set out for Options 2 and 3?

13. What, in your opinion, would be the likely effects of the proposals on the Welsh language? We are particularly interested in any likely effects on opportunities to use the Welsh language and on not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English
Do you think that there are opportunities to promote any positive effects?
Do you think that there are opportunities to mitigate any adverse effects?

14. In your opinion, could the proposals be formulated or changed so as to:
have positive effects or more positive effects on using the Welsh language

and on not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English; or mitigate any negative effects on using the Welsh language and on not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English?

15. We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them

UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)

The Welsh Government will be data controller for any personal data you provide as part of your response to the consultation. Welsh Ministers have statutory powers they will rely on to process this personal data which will enable them to make informed decisions about how they exercise their public functions. Any response you send us will be seen in full by Welsh Government staff dealing with the issues which this consultation is about or planning future consultations. Where the Welsh Government undertakes further analysis of consultation responses then this work may be commissioned to be carried out by an accredited third party (for example, a research organisation or a consultancy company). Any such work will only be undertaken under contract. Welsh Government's standard terms and conditions for such contracts set out strict requirements for the processing and safekeeping of personal data.

In order to show that the consultation was carried out properly, the Welsh Government intends to publish a summary of the responses to this document. We may also publish responses in full. Normally, the name and address (or part of the address) of the person or organisation who sent the response are published with the response. If you do not want your name or address published, please tell us this in writing when you send your response. We will then redact them before publishing.

You should also be aware of our responsibilities under Freedom of Information legislation.

If your details are published as part of the consultation response, then these published reports will be retained indefinitely. Any of your data held otherwise by Welsh Government will be kept for no more than three years.

Your rights

Under the data protection legislation, you have the right:

- to be informed of the personal data held about you and to access it
- to require us to rectify inaccuracies in that data
- to (in certain circumstances) object to or restrict processing
- for (in certain circumstances) your data to be 'erased'
- to (in certain circumstances) data portability
- to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) who is our independent regulator for data protection.

For further details about the information the Welsh Government holds and its use, or if you want to exercise your rights under the UK GDPR, please see contact details below:

Data Protection Officer:

Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

Email: **data.protectionofficer@gov.wales**

The contact details for the Information Commissioner's Office are:

Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Tel: 01625 545 745 or 0303 123 1113

Website: **https://ico.org.uk/**

Footnotes

[1] Subject to any adjustment year on year.

[2] MR report.

[3] MR report.

[4] MR report.

[5] Kelloggs (2015) Isolation and hunger: the reality of school holidays for struggling families [Online]. [Accessed 04 October 2022].

Details: "41 per cent of parents on low household incomes say they sometimes feel isolated in the school holiday due to being unable to afford to go out and entertain their children" (Kelloggs, 2015).

[6] CPAG.

[7] Miller Report 2023, paragraph 5.7.

[8] MR report.

[9] MR report paragraph 5.7 Teacher Tapp, 'Which half term do teachers find the most and least enjoyable?', July 2022; TES (2019) **Autumn term is the NQT slayer [Online]**. [Accessed 29 June 2022].

Details: The Education Support Partnership, a charity that runs a helpline for teachers suffering from mental health issues, says stress builds in teachers during the autumn term. For Miller work to corroborate.

Teacher Tapp (July 2022) found that 39% of secondary teachers state that autumn 2 is their least enjoyable half term, compared with 24% of primary teachers saying this.
Some NQTs will spend the majority of autumn half-term working, with the Christmas holiday being the biggest 'quitting point' (TES, 2019). Miller report.

[10] MR report.

[11] School Health Research Network (2021) Student Health and Well-being in Wales: **Report of the 2019 to 2020 School Health Research Network Student Health and Well-being Survey [Online]**. [Accessed 22 September 2022].

School Health Research Network (2022) Youth Mental Health and Well-being in Wales: **Comparing findings from the 2019 and 2021 School Health Research Network Student Health and Well-being Survey. [Online]**. [Accessed 22 September 2022].

Details: The SHRN found that in 2019, 31 per cent of secondary learners felt lonely during the summer holidays.

[12] MR report.

[13] Miller report 2023, paragraphs 5.7 and 5.8.

[14] "Learning loss was also thought to be a problem for learners at Welsh-

medium school who spoke little or no Welsh at home, resulting in six weeks without speaking the language. A few education workforce participants explained that the long break impacted on these learners' language development and made it difficult for them to re-engage with the language" (Beaufort and Cazbah, 2022).

[15] MR report.

[16] MR report.

[17] Office for National Statistics (March 2022) **Families and households in the UK: 2021 [online]**. [Accessed 14 November 2022].

Office for National Statistics (July 2022) **Families and the labour market, UK: 2021 [online]**. [Accessed 14 November 2022].

Details: ONS (2022) reports that in 2021 71.9% of females were in employment compared to 52.7% in 1971 whereas 78.3% of males were employed in 2021 compared to 91.4% in 1971.

[18] Office for National Statistics (July 2022) **Families and the labour market, UK: 2021 [online]**. [Accessed 14 November 2022]. Details: ONS (2022) found that "from 2020, in families where both parents are employed, it has become more common for both parents to work full-time, rather than a man working full-time with a partner working part-time" (ONS, July 2022).

[19] TUC (2021) **Summer holiday childcare: no let up for working mums A TUC Gender Equality Briefing [Online]**. [Accessed 10 October 2022].

"Families on low incomes experience a range of challenges during holiday periods, including financial pressures and difficulties in sourcing childcare or holiday activities which are accessible, affordable and fit with parental employment and the needs of the family" (CPAG, 2015).
TUC (2021) reports that "nearly two thirds (63 per cent) of mums with primary

aged children do not have sufficient childcare for the summer holidays. This rises to three quarters (76 per cent) for single parents" (TUC, 2021).

"Where holiday childcare is unavailable or too expensive, parents are left with few options. Rather than looking forward to the long break, many parents dread the juggling act between family, friends and annual leave to make sure that their children are well looked after, and some struggle to stay in work" (Cottell, Descateaux and Coleman, 2019).

[20] The reasons for exploring the above proposals from the 2029 to 2030 school year are that the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) are responsible for the overall examination timetable across England and Wales and include a five-day break in May/June during the summer examination series. The expectation is that as the Made-for-Wales qualifications are rolled out, Wales could move away from JCQ alignment, allowing for the option of a moved or extended May break to be taken forward. Moving GCSE results day forward would require the overall GCSE timetable to move forward to facilitate earlier awarding. This is dependent on a move away from JCQ alignment.

[21] The current terms and conditions are set out in the **School Teachers' Pay and Conditions (Wales) Order 2023** (S.I. 2023/443), which was made pursuant to s. 122 of the 2002 Act (concerning the power of the Secretary of State to prescribe pay and conditions of schoolteachers.

[22] The **Burgundy Book** is an agreement between the National Employers' Organisation for School Teachers, teachers' unions and the English and Welsh Local Government Associations. It is a 'collective agreement' under s. 178(1) of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.

For more information refer to our **accessibility statement**.

RHONDDA CYNON TAF

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2023-24

EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

22ND JANUARY 2024

THE WORK OF THE CENTRAL SOUTH CONSORTIUM IN THE REGION AND RHONDDA CYNON TAF LOCAL AUTHORITY 2022 - 2023

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES

1. **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members of the contribution of the Central South Consortium (CSC) in the region and Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Authority 2022-2023 to raising standards in schools across Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT).

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

    It is recommended that Members:

2.1 Receive the content of Central South Consortium's report provided in Appendix 1: *'Annual RCT Local Authority Scrutiny Report: Central South Consortium 2022-23'.*

2.2 Scrutinise and comment on the information provided.

2.3 Consider whether they wish to scrutinise in greater depth any matters contained in Central South Consortium's report.

3. **BACKGROUND**

3.1 Since 2012, CSC has delivered aspects of school improvement services on behalf of the five local authorities: Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf and the Vale of Glamorgan. This covers 380 schools, around 32% of Wales's children. It is a growing region with rapidly changing demographic, encompassing increasingly diverse communities across the economic sub region. It remains the region with the highest number of children living in poverty, with around 25% claiming free school meals.

3.2 The service delivers challenge and support on behalf of the five local authorities, governed through a Joint Committee of Cabinet Members from each authority. The Joint Committee meets regularly and formally approves the

annual business plan and budget for the service, holding the service to account in terms of performance and budgetary control.

3.3   Scrutiny Committees in each of the five authorities invite the Principal Improvement Partner/s attached to the authority to report on the performance of the schools and the contribution of the consortium at any stage during the year. An annual report from the consortium relating to progress in the previous academic year and priorities for the year ahead is also provided.

4.   UPDATE / CURRENT POSITION

4.1   Please refer to the report provided in Appendix 1 for further information.

5.   EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS/SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

5.1   This is an information report. No Equality Impact Assessment screening form is required.

6.   WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

6.1   Please refer to Section 6.5.5 and Appendix B for further information.

7.   CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

7.1   There are no consultation implications aligned to this report.

8.   FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1   The cost of Central South Consortium's service to the Council is £976,904 for the period 2022-23, representing 2.4% of the LA retained budget.

9.   LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

9.1   None at present.

10.   LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN/OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES / WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

10.1   Educational performance has a clear link to the Council's priorities of ensuring people are independent, healthy and successful; enabling prosperity, creating the opportunity for people to fulfil their potential and prosper. Improved educational performance will have a positive impact on these priorities.

11.   CONCLUSION

11.1   Central South Consortium's annual report provides an overview of the school improvement services it has provided on behalf of Rhondda Cynon Taf from 2022-23.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

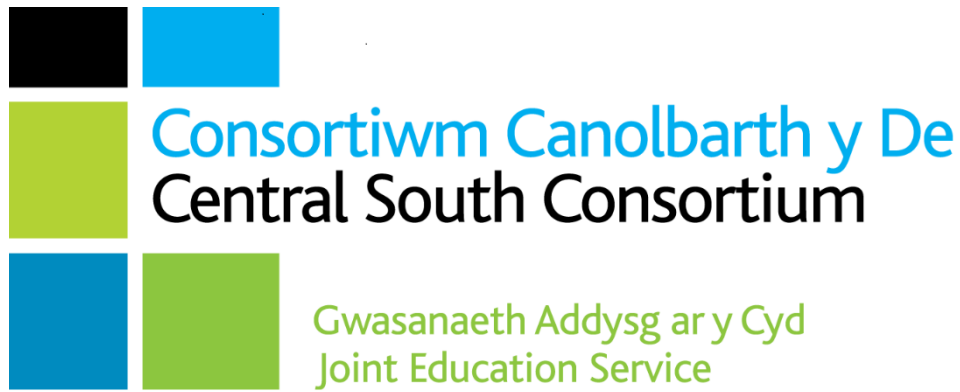**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

EDUCATION & INCLUSION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

22ND JANUARY 2024

THE WORK OF THE CENTRAL SOUTH CONSORTIUM IN THE REGION AND RHONDDA CYNON TAF LOCAL AUTHORITY 2022-2023

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES

Annual RCT Local Authority Scrutiny Report
Central South Consortium

2022-23

(Presentation in January 2024)

1.0   PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of the report is to provide an overview of the work of the Central South Consortium (CSC) and to update Members with the contribution of the CSC, working in partnerships with the local authority (LA) to raising standards in schools across RCT. This report details the work of the consortium for the academic year September 2022/2023 and the financial year April 2022 to April 2023.

2.0   BACKGROUND

Since 2012, CSC has delivered aspects of school improvement services on behalf of the five local authorities: Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf and the Vale of Glamorgan. This covers 380 schools, around 32% of Wales's children. It is a growing region with rapidly changing demographic, encompassing increasingly diverse communities across the economic sub region. It remains the region with the highest number of children living in poverty, with around 25% claiming free school meals.

The service delivers challenge and support on behalf of the five local authorities, governed through a Joint Committee of Cabinet Members from each authority. The Joint Committee meets regularly and formally approves the annual business plan and budget for the service, holding the service to account in terms of performance and budgetary control.

The Business plan for 2022/23 ran from 1st April 2022 until 31st March 2023 and had the following areas of priority:

1. Curriculum, Teaching & Assessment
2. Leadership
3. Equity and Wellbeing
4. School Improvement
5. Effectiveness and efficiency of Central South Consortium

The business plan sets out how CSC aims to deliver these priorities through effective school self-evaluation and improvement planning, underpinned by building capacity in schools to support other schools through the continued development of the 'Central South Wales Challenge[1]'.

Drive Teams comprising senior leaders from across the consortium ensured that the operational plans for each priority were implemented and that impact was measured. Half-termly reviews, including an impact review with the Managing Director of CSC, and LA Directors of Education, were held at the end of each term, and ensured that monitoring was robust.

A report on the progress and impact of the Business Plan 2022 - 23 is presented to the CSC Management Board and Joint Committee.

The consortium Business Plan for April 2022 to March 2025 can be found here.

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[1] Central South Wales Challenge information can be found here

3.0   OVERVIEW OF PERFORMANCE

3.1   National Data Collections and Published Information

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Welsh Government (WG) has cancelled most of the statutory data collections for 2020, 2021 and 2022. The collections suspended include:

- Attendance: Primary 2020, 2021 and 2022 data collections
- Attendance: Secondary 2020, 2021 and 2022 data collections
- National Data Collections (NDC): All 2020 and 2021 data collections, and FP and KS2 for 2022

For 2023 however, the following collections have now been resumed:

- Attendance: Primary data collections
- Attendance: Secondary data collections
- National Data Collections (NDC): KS3 only

The majority of national publications were suspended from Summer 2020 reporting, but performance measures for Summer 2023 results will be reintroduced during Autumn Term 2023. At the time of publication of this report no performance measures are available for the final 2023 results, with the provisional information only being made available at national level.

National examination results released in August 2023 were brought back to be around halfway between the 2019 and 2022 results. Comparison of the results for CSC in 2023 to Wales results showed that CSC either matched or exceeded the national proportions for GCSE %A*- A, %A*- C and %A*- G. For A Level results, CSC exceeded the national proportions for the three measures of %A*- A, %A*- C and %A*- E, with CSC also being above the national proportions for AS Levels (%A, %A - C, %A - E).

3.2   Estyn Inspections

All Estyn inspections were suspended in March 2020[2]; however, a new pilot framework[3] was introduced in early spring term 2022. The new inspection framework no longer provides judgements for inspection areas as available in previous inspection frameworks. However, information on 'Interesting or Innovative Practice Case Studies' is still identified in the new reports, alongside the recording of any statutory and non-statutory follow-up inspection categories. Details can be found in the individual LA Scrutiny Reports.

In Central South Consortium, 68 schools were inspected between September 2022 and July 2023, with 18 of these schools being identified to produce 'Interesting or Innovative Practice Case Studies' following their inspections. Twenty-two schools were placed in Estyn follow-up

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[2] https://www.estyn.gov.wales/news/estyn-will-not-inspect-maintained-schools-next-academic-year-statement-meilyr-rowlands-hmci
[3] https://www.estyn.gov.wales/news/owen-evans-her-majestys-chief-inspectors-speech-17-february-2022

categories: thirteen in Estyn Review (19.1%), two in significant improvement (2.9%) and seven in special measures (10.3%).

In RCT, eighteen schools were inspected between September 2022 and July 2023, with eleven of these not requiring any form of follow-up and one of these schools being identified to produce "Interesting or Innovative Practice Case Studies" following their inspections.

Seven schools were placed in Estyn follow-up categories: five in Estyn Review, one in Significant Improvement and one in Special Measures.

Table 1: Number of schools inspected 2021/22 and 2022/23

	Primary		Secondary		Middle		Special		Pupil Referral Units	
	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23
Bridgend	2	11	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
The Vale of Glamorgan	5	8	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rhondda Cynon Taf	8	14	0	1	1	2	0	1	0	0
Merthyr Tydfil	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Cardiff	8	18	2	3	0	0	0	4	1	0
CSC	**24**	**54**	**4**	**6**	**1**	**2**	**0**	**5**	**1**	**1**

Estyn resumed their monitoring of schools and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) in a statutory category (special measures or significant improvement) from autumn 2021. During the academic year 2022/23, one school was removed from Estyn Review, with a further three schools remaining in a follow-up category from previous academic years. The follow-up categories for these schools are: one in Estyn Review, one in Significant Improvement and one in Special Measures.

Table 2: Progress of schools in a follow up Estyn category

School	Estyn Category	2021-22 Changes	Current Position (Spring 2023)
Coedpenmaen Primary	Special Measures	Inspected May 2022	Special Measures
Y.G.G. Aberdar	Estyn Review	Inspected September 2022	Estyn Review
Maesgwyn Special	Estyn Review	Inspected February 2023	Estyn Review
Coedylan Primary	Special Measures	Inspected February 2023	Special Measures

Bryncelynnog Comprehensive	Estyn Review	Inspected March 2023	Estyn Review
Llanharan Primary	Estyn Review	Inspected March 2023	Estyn Review
Alaw Primary	Estyn Review	Inspected March 2023	Estyn Review
Ynyshir Primary	Significant Improvement	Inspected June 2023	Significant Improvement

Schools in RCT LA where Innovative Practice Case Studies following Estyn inspections have been requested are:

- Llwydcoed Primary:
Case Study 1 - Reducing the cost of the school day and providing additional support for low-income families in the community.

3.3   Supporting School Development Planning with Performance Data Discussions

The Improvement Partners (IPs) support schools through appropriate challenge to identify clear, manageable improvement priorities as a consequence of effective self-evaluation. The IPs works with school leaders to review first-hand evidence, ensuring that this is rigorous and accurate. In supporting schools in the review of their self-evaluation cycle, IPs work with school leaders to ensure there is coverage of the three overarching areas as referenced in the new framework for school improvement. These are:

- Vision and Leadership
- Curriculum, Learning, and Teaching
- Wellbeing, Equity, and Inclusion

This approach works in conjunction with school systems and will not generate additional work for school leaders. This is in line with the Welsh Government School Improvement Guidance: A Framework for Evaluation, Improvement and Accountability, where it is the intention that these priorities will, in part, replace target setting.

Each school has a unique set of priorities, based on self-evaluation, including the analysis of performance data, needs and improvement journey, ultimately seeking to improve learner outcomes reflecting the bespoke needs of their learners and school community. Therefore, priorities need to ensure a focus on pupil progress. Furthermore, the IPs also support schools in ensuring that improvement priorities are drawn together in a single, strategic school development plan, helping to reduce workload, streamline schools' strategic planning processes and avoid unnecessary duplication and bureaucracy.

In 2023-24, key common focus areas that have been identified by schools include:

- Oracy, Reading, and Writing including Welsh language skills.
- Numeracy
- Digital Competence Skills and learning

- Planning for the development of skills across the curriculum
- Whole School Approach to Mental and Emotional Well-being
- Early Years (Physical Development in Particular)
- Reducing gaps in progress of key groups (EAL, eFSM, MAT learning)
- Attendance and Exclusions
- Engagement and Readiness to Learn
- Dealing with challenging behaviour
- Complex needs and additional learning needs provision
- Independence at age-appropriate levels
- Transition
- Impact of teaching on learning
- Assessment and progression including baseline and mapping pre progression step 1
- Religion, Values and Ethics
- Accuracy of self-evaluation linked to improvement planning.
- Leadership Development
- Curriculum Design and Development

3.4   Alps Analysis

Alps value added performance analysis measures progress against national[4], aspirational benchmarks for each individual student. For 2023, the analysis identified the following key points:

A Level

- Prior attainment (Centre Assessed Grades) was on average slightly higher for the 2023 cohort than for previous cohorts in the years 2020-2022, particularly in the highest third (58.6% 2023 cohort compared with 44.7% 2020 cohort).
- National results were also higher in 2023 than in 2018 or 2019.
- Overall, the value added in 2023 was lower than in 2022, which matches the position for the LA, with the RCT figures in 2023 falling to below that seen in 2019.
- There was little difference between the value added for boys and girls and for eFSM and non-eFSM students for the LA.
- Replicating the same grades through exams may be challenging in 2024 as results will return to be set in line with 2019 results.

AS Level

- Prior attainment (Examinations with advanced information for some subject) was higher for the 2023 cohort figure than for cohorts in 2020 and 2021 but lower than the 2022 cohort.
- In the second year of transitional grading approaches, the national results were also higher than in 2018 or 2019.

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[4] as defined by Alps for their analysis.

- The cohort achieved higher grades in 2023 AS examinations than cohorts in 2018 and 2019 (counting 40% towards A Level).
- National results were also higher in 2023 than in 2018 or 2019.
- AS value added for the LA, increased significantly between 2019 and 2021, and whilst this has decreased over the last two year, the value added for 2023 matches that seen in 2019.
- Replicating the same grades at A Level in 2024 may still be challenging as results will return to be set in line with 2019 results.

Key Stage 4

- KS4 Results were higher nationally in 2023 than in 2018 or 2019.
- Value added, decreased again in 2023 in RCT and equals that seen in 2019.
- Value added rose for eFSM students in the LA by 2021 and whilst this has decreased over the last two years, it continues to exceed that seen in 2019.
- Replicating the same grades at A Level in 2024 may still be challenging as results will return to be set in line with 2019 results.

3.5 PISA

PISA 2022 results information is not available at the time of drafting the report. The focus of PISA 2022 is mathematics, and the results for PISA 2022 are due to be released in December 2023.

4.0 SUPPORT AND CHALLENGE

With the significant reform agenda that is in progress across Wales, it is important CSC continues to ensure the support and challenge provided by Improvement Partners (IPs) is holistic, efficient, and effective in line with the national principles and guidance from Welsh Government.

4.1 Improvement Partner Deployment

In 2022/2023, RCT local authority contributed £976,904 (27%) towards the core functions of the consortium. In addition to the core costs of the consortium this has provided funding for IPs (8.08 FTE), and Principal Improvement Partners (PIPs) (2 FTE).

IPs continue to have a relevant educational background and level of experience and provide good quality support and challenge to schools. Many IPs are accredited or are working towards accreditation by Association of Education Advisers (AOEA). They have continued to work well and in partnership with the local authority to provide effective monitoring, challenge, support, and intervention where needed. Improvement partners have continued to commission bespoke support and intervention from the wider support teams within the CSC.

National Categorisation was suspended from September 2020 and a new evolving model for IP deployment was consulted on in the summer term 2020 and implemented from September 2020. It was reviewed and refined during 2021 to support implementation of the Welsh Government Guidance, Improvement, Evaluation and Accountability in September 2022[5]. This guidance is currently (Nov 23) being reviewed and revised by Welsh Government and key stakeholders with the intention of statutory implementation in September 2024.

4.2   Work Programme of Improvement Partners

During the autumn term, IPs worked together with schools to agree appropriate improvement priorities, construct the school development plan (SDP) and broker support. All IPs gathered authentic first-hand evidence to support the school self-evaluation process. IPs joined school meetings and participated in self-evaluation activities as appropriate. The full schedule of activities is contained in the Framework for School Improvement[6]. These are not a 'tick list' but provided a reminder as to key dates when activity should be completed. IPs built an individual work plan with each school to ensure that these activities were built into the school improvement conversations. There were ongoing themes which were a focus of all visits, these included progress of learners, curriculum, learning and teaching, leadership, well-being, equity and inclusion, effectiveness of self-evaluation and improvement planning.

For example, two particular areas of leadership support are listed below:

Improvement Partner Support for Governance
- Attend at least one Governing Body meeting per year
- Encourage Governors to attend mandatory trainings
- Support Governors with sense making of information
- Encourage Governing Bodies to use the self-evaluation tool
- Support Governors to be able to critically support and challenge leaders in schools and them to account
- Support the Governing Body Panel Headteachers Performance Management process for review, objective setting and mid-year review where appropriate.

Improvement Partner Support for Self-Evaluation
- Partnered learning walks
- Involved in Listening to learners' activities
- Support school improvement planning/documentation
- Partner with school leaders to triangulate and validate reviews of teaching and learning
- Support Senior/middle leaders/teachers to prepare for Estyn inspections

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[5] School improvement guidance: framework for evaluation, improvement and accountability - Hwb (gov.wales)
[6] https://www.cscjes.org.uk/repository/discovery/resource/97df5386-f46a-4287-a766-20eedd70db27/en?sort=recent&strict=0

> **Example: Primary Improvement Partner (IP) working with a peer IP and Headteacher.**
> - The school's IP worked with a peer IP and Headteacher on school self-evaluation processes, to ensure priorities and associated success criteria were bespoke to the needs of the learners and had a positive impact on outcomes for pupils.
> - The IPs and Headteacher undertook a number of self-evaluation activities, including listening to learners, work scrutiny, lesson dips, staff engagement and data analysis.
> - This evidence was captured using a 'Google Drive' document, allowing colleagues to update, share and discuss throughout the experience in real-time.
> - The outcome of this work enabled the Headteacher and senior leaders to create a School Development Plan for the following academic year.
> - The school's IP continued to work with the Headteacher and Governing Body over the course of the year, monitoring effective delivery of the identified priorities.
> - Additional support was highlighted and accessed via the IP and CSC's Curriculum and Professional Learning team, using the Bespoke Support Request system.

4.3   Framework for School Improvement

Support for schools will take the form of core or enhanced support that is provided in a fair way that is inversely proportional to needs of the school. All schools will receive a basic minimum allocation of days and further time will be allocated based on the support needs identified.

This minimum is:
- Primary/Nursery - 7 days
- Special/PRU - 10 days
- Secondary – 10 days
- 3-16/19 - 16 days

Enhanced support schools will receive additional time to reflect the development needs and monitoring requirements. All support will be agreed between the school and IP and shared with the LA when the school improvement priorities are agreed. Specified days might not all be from the same IP but might include work of others more specialists in certain areas. The impact of this support will be monitored half termly and will be shared with LAs in the termly review meetings.

The IP supports schools through appropriate challenge to identify clear, manageable improvement priorities as a consequence of effective self-evaluation. The IP works with school leaders to review first-hand evidence and ensures processes are rigorous and accurate. In supporting schools in the review of their self-evaluation cycle, IPs work with leaders to monitor and evaluate progress against school development plan priorities.

If schools are not demonstrating appropriate rates of progress towards achieving their improvement priorities, this information is discussed with the school, governors, LA and CSC and a decision will then be made as to whether the school may need enhanced support. IPs will then provide a detailed evaluation of progress with a judgement on the rate of progress. If, following discussion between the school, governors, LA, and CSC, it is agreed that progress

is too slow or limited, then the school is moved to enhanced support. The same process exists if a school is making sufficient progress to move from enhanced support.

Key improvement objectives are identified, and regular school improvement forums held for all enhanced schools to judge the impact of the support in enabling the school to meet its objectives. A judgement is made on the extent of the progress the schools have made in meeting each objective. This information is provided to Directors in termly progress reports.

Each term CSC prepares a detailed report for Directors and then meets with them to discuss the aspects of the report that they select. The report contains a detailed breakdown of the support provided within the previous term.

5.0   SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS

5.1   Schools Receiving Enhanced Support

During 2022-23 academic year 18 schools were in enhanced support at some stage during the academic year. 8 schools were in enhanced support across the complete academic year.

The following table analyses the progress judgements made across a wide range of the key priorities in the enhanced support schools. Priorities will often cover several aspects of practice. Judgements are made and agreed in partnership with the school, CSC, and LA officers. The data is based on the 12 schools in enhanced support across the complete year, covering a total of 55 priorities or recommendations.

The priorities have been categorised under five broader headings of:
- Leadership
- Standards and Progress
- Teaching and Learning
- Wellbeing
- Health and Safety.

Table 4: Summary of Progress Against Recommendations

% FIGURES	Progress Autumn 2022		
Aspects of Practice within Priorities	**Limited**	**Satisfactory**	**Strong +**
OVERALL	**55.0%**	**45.0%**	**0.0%**
Curriculum, Learning and Teaching	60.0%	40.0%	0.0%
Standards and Progress	57.1%	42.9%	0.0%
Leadership	66.7%	33.3%	0.0%
Wellbeing	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
Health and Safety	-	-	-
% FIGURES	**Progress Spring 2023**		
Aspects of practice within Priorities	**Limited**	**Satisfactory**	**Strong +**
OVERALL	**5.9%**	**85.3%**	**8.8%**

Curriculum, Learning and Teaching	0.0%	88.9%	11.1%
Standards and Progress	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
Leadership	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
Wellbeing	33.3%	50.0%	16.7%
Health and Safety	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
% FIGURES	**Progress Summer 2023**		
Aspects of Practice within Priorities	**Limited**	**Satisfactory**	**Strong +**
OVERALL	**11.3%**	**47.2%**	**41.2%**
Curriculum, Learning and Teaching	6.7%	53.3%	40.0%
Standards and Progress	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%
Leadership	15.8%	52.6%	31.6%
Wellbeing	25.0%	25.0%	50.0%
Health and Safety	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%

During 2022-23, RCT LA held School Improvement Progress meetings for all of the schools receiving enhanced monitoring. The CSC and LA set relevant agendas for these meetings with schools reporting on progress against their SDPs or Post Inspection Action Plans (PIAPs) and CSC and LA support for the schools reviewed, with any necessary additional brokering of support agreed. Many schools receiving enhanced monitoring during 2022-23 made good progress.

5.2   Intervention Strategy for Schools Causing Concern

The Intervention Strategy for Schools Causing Concern has been reviewed, agreed with all Directors and shared with schools. This has led to clear processes for intervention being understood and utilised by the local authorities and forms the basis of enhanced support work for all settings in the region.

There were no schools in receipt of a LA Statutory Warning Notice and four schools received a pre-warning notice.

6.0   PROFESSIONAL LEARNING & SUPPORT

Professional learning (PL) is a change process to improve and develop professional knowledge, skills and understanding. PL should focus on changes that impact on learners through a practitioner's own learning, leading to increased understanding, and changes in their behaviours, i.e., policies, provision, and practice.

In line with the National Professional Learning Entitlement, CSC is committed to equity of access to high quality PL for all school leaders, including governors, and practitioners in our region. CSC PL opportunities are guided by the eight hallmarks for well-led professional learning as defined by the National Academy for Education Leadership Wales (NAEL).

The CSC Curriculum and Professional Learning (C&PL) team continue to provide a comprehensive range of high quality, evidence-informed PL opportunities to all schools in the region to support local, regional, and national improvement priorities.

PL opportunities are continually considered, planned and published. They include:

- Live or synchronous PL – includes events, programmes, networks and conferences – live focused on a specific area.
- On-demand or asynchronous PL– includes assignments and on- demand recordings of PL focused on a specific area.
- Resources – includes guidance documents, toolkits, poster packs, blogs, vlogs, podcasts, etc.
- Regional collaboration projects – funded opportunities for school practitioners from across the CSC region to collaborate on a particular project focus.

A wide variety of data and intelligence is analysed, and research undertaken to identify and inform PL needs in the region. This includes:

- Analysis of improvement priorities of all schools in the region.
- Analysis of the business plan priorities from the 5 local authorities.
- Welsh Government policy, guidance and relevant grant terms and conditions.
- Regional recommendations from external reports, e.g., Welsh Government, OECD, Estyn, Children's Commissioner, etc.
- Analysis of CSC PL engagement data and PL evaluations.
- Other relevant internal information, e.g., regional reports, SIPLs, all school risk meetings, etc.
- Analysis of other relevant external information, e.g., schools' Estyn reports, etc.
- Other educational and relevant research.

All CSC PL and support is available at no charge to schools in the region. Most PL opportunities are developed and facilitated in partnership with schools within the regional self-improving system, the Central South Wales Challenge (CSWC). C&PL officers also work in partnership with LAs, other regional consortia and partnerships, Welsh Government (WG) and where appropriate, external consultants in the development and facilitation of PL.

6.1   Central South Wales Challenge

The CSWC is the partnership of all schools and settings across the CSC region working together to develop a self-improving system. The CSWC is evaluated annually to ensure it meets the current and evolving needs of schools and the wider system.

The CSWC includes of several components that support the self-improving school system. Each component plays a key role in ensuring that all schools and settings in the region can access appropriate PL and support. Schools and settings should engage with the components and PL activities that best support their school improvement priorities. The CSWC components are categorised broadly into two areas, namely 'professional learning collaborations' and 'professional learning opportunities', (see appendix A CSWC model 2022-2023).

Practitioners and school leaders, including governors, can contribute to the CSWC in key roles to support other schools across the region, working in partnership with the CSC school improvement team to provide professional learning and/or bespoke support to schools across the region.

Practitioners and school leaders, including governors, can contribute to the CSWC in key roles to support other schools across the region, working in partnership with the CSC school improvement team to provide professional learning and/or bespoke support to schools across the region. Roles include lead practitioners (LPs), leadership pathway programme mentors/coaches, cluster convenors, system leaders (SLs) and regional leaders of governance (RLGs).

During 2022-2023 the following CSWC contributors were from RCT schools:

- Lead Practitioners = 8
- Leadership pathways programme mentors/coaches = 15
- Cluster convenors = 16
- System Leader = 5
- Regional Leaders of Governance = 2

6.2   Regional Professional Learning Collaborations

All schools in the CSC region receive collaboration funding to support school leaders and practitioners to participate in collaborative school improvement activities, building capacity both within their school, across their cluster and networks, and within the wider system. These collaborative activities must be focused on the curriculum and wider reforms, and the desired outcome of high standards and aspiration aspirations for all.

During 2022-2023, the total collaboration funding to schools in the region was £5.018m. Each school in the region received a £7,000 lump sum plus £300 per FTE teacher. The total collaboration funded for schools in RCT was £1,382,075.

Headteachers in all schools were requested to complete a short multi-choice survey related to collaboration funding activities.   This information is used effectively for knowledge, development and evaluation within the region, for example:

- To evaluate the impact of professional learning and support for schools.
- To inform the development of further professional learning opportunities.
- To target bespoke support to individual school, clusters and groups of schools as required.
- To report to Welsh Government, local authorities and CSC governance groups.
- To inform CSC self-evaluation and business planning.

During autumn 2022, 99% schools in the region submitted the survey. However, the undertaking of the survey in the summer term 2023 was significantly affected by action short of strike (ASOS) and the further non-engagement of headteachers across the region due the ongoing discussions regarding managing workload and bureaucracy. Only 40% (151/380) of headteachers in the region completed the summer term survey, 38/115 (33%) from schools in RCT. Therefore, the following information cannot be read as a full or accurate summary of progress of the majority of schools in RCT, but only of those 38 schools where headteachers completed the survey.

6.2.1 Clusters

Supporting collaboration across clusters continues to be a priority. Cluster collaboration is an expectation from Welsh Government and the Curriculum for Wales framework places a strong emphasis on cluster collaborations. Leaders need to create the time and space for staff to work alongside others within their school and with those across cluster schools to develop a shared understanding of progression and to ensure high aspirations for al learners. A wide range of support is provided to enable school leaders and teachers to engage in regular professional dialogue and to identify common priorities for the learners within their locality. This includes bespoke PL and support available to all clusters from the CSC curriculum and PL team to meet their specific improvement needs.

There are 16 clusters in RCT, excluding special schools and the pupil referral unit. Clusters are recommended to identify a named convenor, usually a senior leader from a school within the cluster, who receives £1500 to undertake this role. Cluster convenors are required to complete an SLA at the start of the year stating the focus of the cluster work, and an end of year evaluation of the work. They also facilitate the cluster in their collaborative work. During 2022-2023, all clusters in RCT identified a cluster convenor.

Of the RCT schools who returned the summer term collaboration survey, all who were collaborating with their cluster stated this included work on Curriculum for Wales. Of these, nearly all were focusing on developing a shared understanding of progression to support their curriculum design, planning and development along the 3-16 continuum. A majority were collaborating on the Areas of Learning and Experience (Areas) and teaching, whilst half of RCT clusters stated they have further work to do in developing approaches to incorporating the cross-cutting themes across their respective curricula. A very few stated that they needed to further develop relationships and understanding between secondary and primary practitioners in relation to the 3- 16 learning continuum.

Across the region, primary colleagues continued to report the challenge of secondary schools not being able to release subject specialists to support cluster working due to their need to prioritise current examination classes. Expertise to support all disciplines, subjects and Areas is available through the CSC curriculum and PL team and/or school-based lead practitioners.

Examples of effective cluster working in RCT:

The cluster INSET day facilitated by the CSC curriculum team allowed practitioners from across the cluster to deepen their knowledge and understanding of the Curriculum for Wales framework. The day provided the opportunity for practitioners across the schools to network and collaborate, allowing meaningful discussions to take place within and across all the Areas. The cluster are continuing their collaborative work and will participate in further discussions to ensure practitioners can collectively plan and deliver a high-quality curriculum for all learners.

Schools from the cluster were supported by the CSC curriculum team to help them consolidate their understanding of the Curriculum for Wales framework and further develop a shared understanding of progression amongst the practitioners across the schools. Within AoLE workshops, practitioners were supported to identify concepts and big ideas within the Statements of What Matters and consider the non-negotiables as they began to develop cluster progression maps.

6.2.2 School Improvement Groups (SIGs)

A majority of schools across the region are also collaborating on Curriculum for Wales (CfW) with schools from their sector across local authority areas. These self-facilitating school improvement groups (SIGs) predominately focus on progression, teaching, leadership and well-being.

During 2022-2023, 39 SIGs continued as cross LA school collaborations. Staff from the participating schools worked collaboratively on shared areas of school improvement.

Of the schools who submitted the summer term collaboration survey, 58% of schools in the region stated that they are working within a SIG. This included 29/38 (76%) of schools in RCT.

As with clusters, SIGs are required to identify a convenor who receives £1500 to undertake this role. SIG convenors are required to complete an SLA at the start of the year stating the focus of the group's work, and an end of year evaluation of the work. They also facilitate the group in their collaborative work.11 SIG convenors were from schools in RCT.

SIG Focus Areas 2022-2023

SIG focus area	No of primary SIGs	No of secondary/ all age school SIGs	Total no of SIGs
Leadership	16	1	17
Teaching	13	3	16
Progression	12	4	16
Expressive Arts	3	0	3
Health & Well-being	5	0	5
Humanities	3	0	3
LLC: English	1	0	1
LLC: Cymraeg	2	0	2
Maths and Numeracy	3	0	3
Science & Technology	3	0	3
CCS: Literacy	3	1	4
CCS: Numeracy	4	1	5
CCS: Digital Competence	1	1	2
Whole school approach to mental health and well-being	12	1	13
Other, e.g., RSE, ALN, Diversity, RVE	10	4	14

Examples of effective SIG working:

Sharing best practice and processes related to ALN reform. Working together to establish and refine documentation and communication with stakeholders. SIG working has focussed on an important area for all schools due to new legislation. It is a small SIG but extremely useful to those involved as the schools represent different local authorities who have all provided different support and information for their schools. Therefore, all schools in the group were able to benefit from the support given. The work is linked to current priorities in all schools. Many ALNCos work in isolation within their schools so being able to discuss their role and difficulties with a wider group outside of their cluster / LA is very useful and highly valued. Learners and families are better supported within the new ALN system. ALNCos feel more knowledgeable and supported in their role.

To develop standards in the Learning and Teaching of Welsh Second Language. Both teachers and pupils worked together on this project. The most successful part of the project was the Criw Cymraeg from each school working together. The SIG has five schools that have been committed to working together. The meetings of this small group were well attended, the group worked well together and were happy to share resources with each other. The work was linked to the school's priorities, which for some are still ongoing. All staff disseminated practice back at their own school and the Criw Cymraeg taught other pupils in their school the Welsh playground games. The schools are using what they have learned to develop provision of Welsh Second Language throughout their schools, particularly the work of the Criw Cymraeg. The Criw Cymraeg were certainly more enthused in their role and aware of their responsibilities. The teachers involved all felt the sharing of practice was worthwhile and helpful.

6.2.3   School Leader and Practitioner Networks

Networks focus on school improvement related to specific or specific roles. These include regional networks that are facilitated by the CSC curriculum and PL team and/or lead practitioners, National Networks, and self-facilitated networks.

Participation in networks 2022-2023

	CSC		RCT	
	No of delegates	No of schools	No of delegates	No of schools
Regional networks*	1752	325	526	97
National Networks*	220	152	56	40
Self-facilitated networks**	n/a	93	n/a	25

*figures from attendance registers. ** figures from summer term collaboration survey.

CSC provides additional funding to support three focused self-facilitated networks for Welsh medium schools, and special schools and PRUs. During 2022-2023, each of these networks received £30k funding to plan and facilitate PL where their specific needs were not fully met

through the CSC PL offer. Most Welsh medium primary schools participated in 'Y Ffed' and all Welsh medium secondary schools participated in 'Gyda'n Gilydd'. All special schools and PRUs participate in their network.

6.3   Regional and Cross-Regional Professional Learning Opportunities

Engagement in professional learning (PL) events, networks, programmes, assignments, and conferences continues remains high, with school leaders and/or practitioners from nearly all schools in the region participating.

Engagement in CSC and Cross-regional Professional Learning

	CSC		RCT	
Year	No of delegates	% of schools	No of delegates	% of schools
2020-2021	12,117	99.7%	3165	100%
2021-2022	12,190	100%	3410	100%
2022-2023	10,298	99.7%	3018	100%

Summary of evaluations completed by delegates following participation in PL during 2022-2023:
- 94% stated that there would be a change to practice and that the learning would have an impact on pupils in their settings.
- 97% stated that they were confident in the knowledge of the topic following the PL.
- 98% stated that the PL would change their practice, with 95% planning to use what they have learned.
- 75% stated that the PL was linked to their school improvement priorities.
- 94% stated that the PL would impact on learners in their setting.

6.3.1 Bespoke support

Bespoke support is offered to all schools and groups/clusters/SIGs in the region to support priorities that are not fully met by the published PL opportunities. Requests for bespoke support are monitored, tracked and evaluated.

During 2022-2023, CSC received 171 requests for bespoke support. 270 (71%) of schools in the region received bespoke support, either individually, or as part of a group/cluster/SIG. This includes 99 schools in RCT.

Bespoke support is facilitated by the CSC curriculum and PL team and/or lead practitioners. Eight schools from RCT provided bespoke support to other school in the region. Schools are funded for providing this school-to-school support. In all bespoke support there is evidence of impact on the provision at either practitioner or leadership level in the receiving school.

6.3.2   Regional and National Funded Collaboration Projects

During 2022-2023, 65 regional funded collaboration projects were available to all CSC schools to focus on local, regional and national priorities. These included projects relating to curriculum, teaching and assessment.

Regional Collaboration Projects 2022-2023

CSC				RCT			
No of delegates	No of schools	% of schools	Funding to schools	No. delegates	No of schools	% of schools	Funding to schools
607	237	62%	£723,020	186	85	74%	£213,320

During 2022-2023, five national funded projects were available to all schools across the region focused on national priorities. These included projects related to curriculum design, cross-cutting themes, teaching and all Areas of Learning and Experience.

National Funded Projects 2022-2023

CSC				RCT			
No of delegates	No of schools	% of schools	Funding to schools	No. delegates	No of schools	% of schools	Funding to schools
48	38	10%	£261,500	10	9	8%	£52,900

6.3.3 School-led professional learning, enquiry, and research; and professional learning for developing practice and reflection.

During 2022-2023, the focus of this area continued to promote enquiry, research and reflective practice as an integral aspect of school improvement. This supports the development of Schools as Learning Organisations (SLO) and builds capacity in the education system.

Regional resources continue to be available to all schools to support the development and embedding of enquiry approaches. Promoting and developing practitioners' experience, knowledge and skills in research and enquiry is also embedded within regional PL programmes, networks and projects, as appropriate to the specific PL opportunity. Funding is provided to support schools' engagement in the WG-led research and enquiry projects.

During 2022-2023, 7 schools from RCT were engaged in the National Professional Enquiry Project (NPEP):
- Alaw Primary School
- Dolau Primary
- Maesgwyn
- St. John Baptist High School
- Ynyshir Community Primary
- Ysgol Garth Olwg

Y Pant Comprehensive School was part of the Embedding Research & Enquiry in Schools where they worked with HEI partners to share the enquiry model in their school and generate learning around an identified focus area to support the system to understand developing sustainable whole school models to engage with research and enquiry.

The expertise and support from Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) within these projects are valuable to the participating schools. In evaluations, teachers highlighted that HEIs support them with refining research questions, directing them to relevant literature and articles, methodology, data collection and analysis. However, teachers also raised concerns that without enough time that might not be possible, as some schools had not fully embedded their approaches.

During 2022-2023, three school leaders in the region were appointed as regional SLO champions, including leaders from Fern Federation and Ysgol Gynradd Dolau Primary School. During 2023/24 the SLO champions will be funded to support participants from the leadership pathway programmes to further develop their schools as learning organisations.

6.4   Professional Pathways

The Professional Pathways suite of PL and support seeks to equip practitioners at all levels, from teaching assistants through to senior leaders and governors across the region with the knowledge, experiences, skills and confidence to be effective in their roles.

6.4.1   Leadership Development

Developing strong and effective school leadership continues as a key priority for CSC and is essential in realising Our national mission.

Leadership Pathway Programmes

A comprehensive programme of leadership development continues to be offered to all school leaders across the region, aligning to Welsh Government's Leadership Development Pathway.

These programmes are national programmes that are coordinated and delivered through the region. All programmes have acquired official endorsement from the National Academy for Educational Leadership (NAEL). Middle Leadership Development and Senior Leader Development Programmes have an accreditation option through ILM. They seek to develop the knowledge, skills, experiences and confidence of school leaders, empowering them to maximise their impact on the progress and well-being of all learners.

Engagement in Leadership Pathway Programmes 2022-2023

CSC	Middle leaders	Senior leaders	Aspiring Headteacher	New/Acting Headteachers
No of practitioners	128	59	41	33
No of schools	69	53	40	33

Engagement in Leadership Pathway Programmes 2022-2023

RCT	Middle leaders	Senior leaders	Aspiring Headteacher	New/Acting Headteachers
No of practitioners	25	15	12	6
No of schools	15	13	12	6

All participants in the programmes were supported by an identified mentor/coach. For the middle leadership programme, this is a coach from within their own school. Over 40 headteachers and deputy headteachers from across the region act as coaches to support participants in the other leadership pathway programmes. During 2022-2023, school leaders from 15 schools in RCT undertook this funded role.

Regional networks are established to support middle and senior leaders who are registered on these programmes. Networks for both mentors/coaches and school leaders who facilitate these programmes take place at least termly and ensure consistency in the quality and support for all participants.

The national Experienced Headteacher Programme is aimed at headteachers with five years or more experience in the role to support them to reflect on their leadership journey to date, whilst developing a clear insight into the leadership skills required to create the conditions for change. This programme was due to be piloted during 2020/21 but was postponed due to Covid-19. During 2022-2023 a condensed version of this programme was delivered as a 2-day residential. One headteacher from a school in RCT attended. It provided a valuable opportunity for CSC headteachers to engage with colleagues from across Wales. This programme will be evaluated in March 2024 and will inform the future PL offer for experienced headteachers across Wales.

National Professional Qualification for Headship

During 2022-2023, CSC continued to facilitate assessment for the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH). All candidates were supported by a CSC leadership mentor/coach, a serving headteacher within the region. These guide candidates through their leadership standards review and leadership experience task, and act as a valuable sounding board in preparation for their assessment centre interviews.

30 of the 44 candidates from schools across the region met the criteria and were awarded NPQH. 10 of the 16 candidates from schools in RCT schools met the criteria and were awarded the NPQH.

System Leaders

This programme has been developed by CSC to extend the leadership pathway. Developing system leadership is critical to support schools in curriculum and wider education reform and achieve equity and excellence for all. The CSC System Leader programme is aimed at experienced headteachers who wish to further develop and support other schools and the wider education system.

A total of 14 headteachers have participated in this pilot programme, including seven headteachers from RCT schools. Upon successful completion of a comprehensive PL

programme, the system leaders were made available for deployment across the region to support schools requiring improvement. Improvement Partners work closely with the system leader to plan, monitor and evaluate the impact of this leadership support. In 2022-2023, one system leader was deployed to support leadership in an RCT schools.

A formal evaluation to analyse the impact of this pilot programme will be completed in Spring 2024.

Other Professional Learning and Support for School Leaders

During 2022-2023, CSC continued to provide high-quality support for school leaders, including governors, via a wide variety of PL events, conferences, assignments, programmes, and networking and collaboration opportunities. This includes providing access to the national coaching and mentoring programme delivered by Results Driven Group, as well as the regional programme of coaching and mentoring (see section 6.4.6).

6.4.2   School Governors

Governors are a crucial part of the leadership of schools. They have an essential role in supporting school improvement and promoting the highest standards and aspirations for all learners. To undertake their strategic role in the school effectively, governors need to ensure they have the relevant up-to-date knowledge and skills.

In partnership with Local Authority Governor Support Services, CSC continues to provide a range of high-quality, evidence-informed PL opportunities, and support and guidance for school governors. CSC facilitates the delivery of mandatory PL for governors. All new governors must attend the understanding data, and new to governors sessions. New chairs of governors must also attend the new chair of governors session.

In addition to the mandatory training, CSC also provides PL sessions for governors in relation to key areas. During 2022-2023, 76 regional PL sessions, 1251 governors engaged with these sessions, including governors from 106 (92%) schools in RCT.

Topics covered included:
- Enabling Equity & Excellence – 3 sessions
- Curriculum for Wales (CfW) – 6 sessions
- Headteacher Performance Management – 2 sessions
- Introduction to Coaching Skills – 6 sessions
- School as Learning Organisations – 3 sessions
- Developing Welsh in Education – 2 sessions
- Introduction to the Self-Evaluation Toolkit – 4 sessions
- Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE) – 2 sessions
- The School Evaluation, Improvement Accountability Framework – 1 session
- Supporting Schools Through Inspection – 2 sessions
- Well-being – 6 sessions

Bespoke support is also available to governing bodies from the CSC Regional Leaders of Governance (RLG). Requests for bespoke support from an RLG must be discussed with the Headteacher, Chair of Governors and Improvement Partner.

The CSC governor self-evaluation toolkit continues to be available to support governing bodies across the region.

Regional Leaders of Governance (RLGs)

Where governance works well, it strengthens school leadership and creates a culture of high ambition where all children and young people are expected to thrive. The best governing bodies have an in-depth knowledge of their schools and provide insightful challenge and support to help drive school performance and ensure that there is robust financial accountability and oversight. Where governance is ineffective, it is important that governing bodies access high quality support and guidance so that they can develop and improve.

CSC RLGs are highly effective governors with extensive experience from schools within the region. RLGs provide strategic and operational support for schools where governance is identified as an area for improvement.

During 2022-2023, 13 RLGs continued to support school improvement across the region. Two RLGs are serving governors from schools in RCT.

CSC LA Principal Improvement Partners, in collaboration with the headteacher, the school's Governing Body and the LA, are responsible for identifying and brokering support by an RLG for a school. In 2022-2023, one governing body of a school in RCT was supported by an RLG.

RLGs also support the facilitation of PL for school governors and other regional school improvement activities related to governors, as appropriate.

A formal evaluation analysing the impact of RLGs will be completed in spring 2024.

6.4.3   Teaching Assistant Learning Pathway (TALP)

CSC continues to offer the three national TALP programmes, providing a learning pathway to support teaching assistants (TAs) throughout their career. This includes TAs who wish to gain Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) status. Each programme builds on the knowledge, understanding and skills of the TA. All programmes are offered in Welsh and English to all TAs across the region.

During 2022-2023, 139 practitioners engaged in the regional TALP programmes, including 36 TAs from schools in RCT. Of the 64 practitioners from across the region who completed the Aspiring HLTA programme, 50 (78%) were assessed and awarded HLTA status, 13 of these TAs were from schools in RCT.

Bespoke support for TAs was made available to all schools and clusters across the region from summer term 2023. This support is provided by two HLTAs seconded to CSC from schools in the region.

During 2022, CSC launched a TALP online community which is updated regularly with resources to support TAs in their role. To date 92 TAs have joined the community.

Experienced TAs and HLTAs also have the opportunity to become trained HLTA assessors, PL facilitators, and TA coaches, supporting other TAs within their own school and in other schools in the region. There are currently 19 trained assessors, three from schools in RCT.

6.4.4 Initial Teacher Education (ITE)

During 2022-2023, 272 schools across the region, including 72 schools in RCT, supported student teachers in partnership with five ITE providers to deliver a range of ITE programmes and routes.

Of these schools, 12 are Lead Schools across the partnerships and 14 have employer status with the Open University (with salaried students). The remainder are placement schools.

The total number of students across Wales awarded Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) in 2023 was 1,054. Of those, 501 graduates were enrolled with Cardiff Metropolitan University.

Between February and June 2023, a presentation on Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) Induction was given by the cross-regional team to ITE students in all Welsh universities. To bridge the transition into employment, all QTS graduates were invited to sign up to a region for support and communications over the summer period. By August 2023, 319 QTS graduates joined the CSC QTS team increasing from 223 in 2021-22, and 150 in 2020-21. 89 QTS graduates attended a CSC 'Welcome to the region' session in August 2023.

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6.4.5 Newly Qualified Teacher Induction

Induction is a statutory requirement for all NQTs in Wales who have gained QTS. Schools have a statutory obligation to provide NQTs with induction support. CSC acts as the Appropriate Body (AB) for all NQTs in the region.

CSC works in partnership with schools in the region to ensure that every NQT in the region has the necessary support during their induction period. NQTs work with induction mentors (IMs), external mentors (EMs), external verifiers (EVs) and the CSC team to undertake induction. CSC, as the AB, leads the necessary verification and administrative processes with regards to induction.

During 2022-2023, there were 570 NQTs in the region. The professional learning offer for induction included:

- National events and programmes, facilitated by regional consortia and other partnerships.
- The CSC NQT Aspire programme, developed and facilitated by the 22 Aspire schools across the region.
- Networking opportunities
- Coaching and mentoring PL for IMs, EMs and EVs

The national induction PL programme was offered between September and December 2022.

Engagement in the National Induction PL 2022-2023

CSC			RCT		
EVs	IMs/EMs	NQTs	EVs	IMs/EMs	NQTs
100%	81%	94%	100%	76%	84%

The CSC 'Aspire' programme is facilitated by trained tutors in 22 host schools from across the region, including all phases and sectors. Six schools in RCT facilitate the Aspire programme:
- Hawthorn High School
- Miskin Primary School
- Tonyrefail Community School
- Treorchy Comprehensive school
- Y Pant Comprehensive School
- Ysgol Nantgwyn

The programme consists of high-quality PL, combining discussion, research, sharing, observation, learning walks and time for reflection. During 2022-2023, 363 NQTs, including supply NQTs (88% of all new NQTs), engaged with the programme, including 79 (92%) NQTs from schools RCT.

Over the 5-day programme, between 93-97% of NQTs evaluated that the sessions enhanced their knowledge and were relevant and appropriate for their needs. 85% of NQT profiles that passed assessment in July 2023 specifically referenced regional PL in their evidence and the positive impact the PL had on their practice (an increase from 70% the previous year).

Three schools took part in a pilot project to explore a holistic approach to demonstrating the Professional Standards for Teaching and Leadership in their online profile. NQTs undertook one enquiry per term, rather than 10-20 professional learning experiences and feedback was positive. The pilot has now been adopted as a national pilot across Wales, that may lead to shaping a new approach for all NQTs in the future. Treorchy Comprehensive School was involved in this project.

With the exception of the leadership pathway programmes, NQTs can also engage with all other CSC PL opportunities, support and resources.

A number of regional PL and support activities were made available for all IMs, EMs and EVs throughout 2023-23. These included:

- Monthly updates posted in the CSC online community.
- A coaching and mentoring programme – spring 2023.
- LA cluster meetings – 16 attended RCT cluster hosted at Ysgol Nantgwyn.
- A 'Mentoring Matters' conference held in 2023 July. 15 RCT mentors attended, and the mentor from Ysgol Nantgwyn was invited to present their practice at the event.

All evaluations provided positive feedback and mentors welcomed the continuation of these opportunities to meet and support each other to effectively undertake their role next year.

In July 2023, 325 NQTs passed induction: 316 on contracts and 9 short term supply (STS). These included 57 Welsh Medium and 268 English Medium practitioners, 80 of whom were working in schools in RCT. There were no fails processed.

6.4.6 Coaching and Mentoring

CSC continues to embed its strategy for coaching and mentoring. The strategy aims to build a sustainable culture of coaching and mentoring across the region to support school improvement. During 2022-2023, CSC provided a range of opportunities for schools to access PL in coaching and mentoring.

Engagement in Coaching and Mentoring PL 2022-2023

CSC			RCT		
Regional programme	National Programme	ILM Awards	Regional programme	National Programme	ILM Awards
50	48	17	7	6	2

The regional PL coaching and mentoring programme is aimed at practitioners and school leaders, including governors, who want to develop their knowledge and skills in effective coaching and mentoring. The programme is facilitated regionally by 6 lead practitioners who have attended the national programme, including leaders from Aberdare Town Church in Wales Community School, Ysgol Hen Felin and Gwauncelyn Primary School.

The national coaching and mentoring programme continues to be facilitated by Results Driven Group. This a train the trainer programme and participants can then deliver the training to others in their school and clusters across CSC.

Following the national programme, participants continue to have the opportunity to participate in an ILM L3, 5 or 7 Award in Coaching and Mentoring.

16 clusters in RCT now have a trained facilitator in coaching and mentoring PL.

6.5 Professional Learning and Support for Curriculum, Teaching and Assessment

There are wide-ranging PL opportunities available to all schools focused on curriculum, teaching and assessment. This includes regional, cross-regional and WG-led PL events, programmes, conferences, networks, projects, guidance and resource.

In line with Welsh Government guidance, CSC has defined a school's curriculum as *'everything a learner experiences in pursuit of the four purposes. It is not simply what we teach, but how we teach and crucially, why we teach it'*. Therefore, CSC curriculum PL and support includes:

- 'the what' - curriculum design and progression
- 'the how' - pedagogy/teaching
- 'the how do you know' - assessment

- underpinned by 'the why' - Our national mission and the four purposes.

As such, support for teaching and assessment is embedded throughout CSC's curriculum PL and support, as well as through dedicated PL opportunities.

Engagement in regional PL focused on curriculum, teaching assessment 2022-2023

	CSC			RCT		
	Regional PL (excl. networks)	Regional networks	Regional funded collaboration projects	Regional PL (excl. networks)	Regional networks	Regional funded collaboration projects
No of delegates	5416	1868	573	1233	511	173
No of schools	370	324	235	108	96	83
% of schools	97%	85%	62%	93.9%	83.5%	72.2%

Over 80 focused regional curriculum networks were available to all schools across the region. These provide opportunities for practitioners and leaders to reflect, share processes and approaches, and critically self-evaluate and improve practice related to all areas of curriculum reform. These included 24 secondary subject discipline networks active across the CSC region to support the development of the level 2 and level 3 qualifications. 99 practitioners across 16 (94%) secondary schools in RCT participated in these networks.

In July 2023, the CSC Curriculum Conference focused on the 'What, How and How Do We Know'. Nearly 200 practitioners from over a third of schools across the region attended this in-person event, including 41 school leaders from 33 (29%) schools in RCT. Eight schools and clusters from across the region led high-quality workshops, sharing their practice. The workshops focused on progression, teaching, assessment, cluster working, Welsh and the cross-curricular skills. Ysgol Gynradd Dolau Primary School led a workshop on 'An approach to developing Relationships and Sexuality Education'. Recordings of all sessions are also available to all schools on the CSC website.

CSC has also developed a CSC Design Thinking Model that provides a scaffold for schools in curriculum design and refinement. Schools and clusters can engage with this model independently or with bespoke support from the CSC team.

Bespoke support for is available to all schools and clusters/groups of schools, tailored to meet the needs of school leaders and practitioners to support school improvement priorities related to curriculum, teaching and assessment. During 2022-2023, CSC received 171 requests for bespoke support related to these areas. 97 were related to schools in RCT.

6.5.1 Curriculum for Wales (CFW)

Improvement Partners (IPs) continue to support all schools in school improvement related to curriculum and the wider educational reforms. This includes supporting improvement planning and self-evaluation activities related to CfW, signposting relevant CSC PL opportunities, and brokering bespoke support from the CSC curriculum and PL team.

For all primary schools (all year groups), and special schools, the implementation of CfW commenced in September 2022. Mandatory roll-out for secondary schools and PRUs commences with Year 7 and Year 8 in September 2023. However, secondary schools and PRUs were given the option of rolling out to Year 7 in September 2022. Three of the secondary schools in RCT implemented CfW in Year 7 from September 2022.

During 2022-2023, CSC provided detailed reports for each LA related to the school's implementation, PL and support.

Roll-out September 2022

All nursery, primary and all-age schools region have designed, developed and implemented a curriculum considering the CfW framework and the needs of all learners. The curriculum in all these schools will be kept under review and further developed and refined through a range of activities within the school's self-evaluation cycle. All these schools have published their curriculum summaries and nearly all have developed transition plans with their cluster.

Two PRUs and nine secondary schools in RCT designed, developed, and implemented a curriculum for Year 7 considering the CfW framework and the needs of all learners. They also designed, planned and trialled a curriculum for Year 8, with a view to year-on-year roll-out.

These schools continue to further develop their approaches to curriculum, teaching and assessment as appropriate to their school vision, ensuring they are meeting the needs of their pupils in supporting learner progress.

Roll-out September 2023

During the 2022-2023 academic year, seven secondary schools in RCT designed, developed and trialled a curriculum for Years 7 and 8 for implementation in September 2023. During the summer term of 2023 each of the governing bodies (management committee in the case of the PRU) formally adopted their respective curricula and curriculum summaries were published.

The PRU and two of the non-roll-out secondary schools stated they were fully compliant with the mandatory elements of CfW for Years 7 and 8, whilst one secondary school acknowledged that they had further work to do in ensuring compliance with all mandatory elements and were supported in this. Two secondary schools stated they have minor work to do in further developing, trialling and finalising transition planning with their cluster whilst another stated themselves as having significant additional work to develop in this area. This school was further supported by their IP and the curriculum and PL team to achieve full legal compliance of their curriculum for autumn term 2023.

5.2.2 Literacy / Languages, Literacy and Communications: English

The CSC professional learning offer for Literacy/LLC: English continues to be strong. It supports schools to provide a curriculum that enables learners to be confident and critical receivers of language, through listening and reading, and effective producers of language, in speech and writing, which they can apply across all areas. 747 delegates from 224 (59%) schools in the region engaged in LLC PL programmes, events, conferences, assignments, and networks. This included 198 delegates from 69 (60%) schools in RCT.

Engagement in CSC LLC PL opportunities 2022-2023

RCT	Regional PL (excl. networks)	Regional networks	Regional funded collaboration projects
No of practitioners	133	65	78
No of schools	58	37	65
% of schools	50%	32%	57%

Bespoke support for Literacy/LLC: English is available to all schools and clusters/groups of schools. During 2022-2023, CSC received requests for bespoke support from 33 schools in RCT related to this area.

Whole school approach to oracy and reading.

Engagement with the Welsh Government whole school approach to oracy and reading is strong. Networks and online communities provide the vehicle for sharing the national toolkit and effective practice. In 2018 CSC has developed strategic and comprehensive plan to systematically improve provision for oracy. Since 2018 CSC has funded over 200 teachers to engage in professional learning facilitated by Voice 21. This has meant that each cluster has at least one 'oracy champion' to support oracy development. In addition to this currently CSC is funding 28 schools to work towards becoming an accredited centre of excellence with Voice 21. This includes:
- Ysgol Garth Olwg
- Treorchy Comprehensive School
- Pontypridd High School
- Cwmclydach Primary School
- Darren Park Primary School
- Cwmdar Primary School
- Penrhiwceibr Primary School

In line with CSC's ethos of a self-improving system these schools will be trained to support and develop oracy across the region.

Support for reading has always been central to the CSC professional learning offer. The PL offer has breadth and depth drawing together the different strands that make for effective reading. It not only targets the teaching of reading from early reading through to text comprehension, but also addresses how building progression into a reading curriculum is vital

to develop reading fluency, confidence, and resilience. Central to CSC reading support are a number of PL learning programmes:

- Effective Teaching of Early Reading Skills - this PL programme supports foundation phase practitioners to strengthen their understanding of how to teach early reading skills in nursery and reception classes.

- An Introduction to Guided Group Reading - this PL programme focuses on supporting the teaching of guided group reading.

- Reading Reconsidered - this intensive PL programme comprises three full days of instructional and collaborative sessions to develop rigour, insight and precision in reading. The programme takes practitioners through evidence-informed actionable strategies to develop pedagogy and practice for reading.

- Developing a Rigorous Reading Curriculum - this PL programme supports practitioners to develop research informed strategies for curriculum planning and the teaching of reading.

- Words Matter: Supporting the Teaching of Vocabulary - this PL programme includes demonstration of how explicit vocabulary instruction can become part of a repertoire of teaching practice which produces, enhances and accelerates the learning of the lesson.

Practitioner Engagement in CSC Oracy and Reading PL Programmes 2022-2023

Synchronous oracy PL	Asynchronous oracy PL	Synchronous reading PL	Asynchronous reading PL
16	17	15	15

N.B. Synchronous PL is live and may be in-person or online. Asynchronous PL is online and on-demand, which maybe pre-recorded sessions or assignments.

In evaluations completed by practitioners upon completion of the programmes, the following was stated:

- As a result of engaging with PL focused on LLC, nearly all (97%) participants considered that their knowledge had improved in some way.
- 98% of practitioners intended to use learning from the programme, and over three quarters (79%) of practitioners reported that the learning from the programmes will result in a more fundamental change to practice. (79%).
- Most participants (96%) anticipated the PL would have an impact on learners in their setting, while many participants (79%) felt the PL would have a significant impact on learners in their setting.

6.5.3 Mathematics and Numeracy

During 2022-2023, CSC continued to offer a [wide range of PL](#) for mathematics & numeracy for schools to engage to meet their improvement needs in this area. PL focused on the developing strategies to enhance the teaching of the Area of mathematics and numeracy, and the cross-curricular skill of numeracy, specifically:

- Developing numeracy through the five proficiencies.
- Using manipulatives to support mathematical understanding.
- Teaching strategies to enhance reasoning and problem solving.
- Strengthening numeracy across the curriculum.
- Enhancing whole school strategic development of numeracy.
- Providing opportunities to share effective practice across the region.

171 delegates from 26.8% (102) schools in the region engaged in PL programmes, events, conferences, assignments, and networks. This included 55 delegates from 32 (28%) schools in RCT.

Engagement in CSC Mathematics and Numeracy PL opportunities 2022-2023

RCT	Regional PL (excl. networks)	Regional networks	Regional funded collaboration projects
No of practitioners	14	41	6
No of schools	9	28	4
% of schools	7.8%	24.3%	3.5%

In evaluations completed by practitioners upon completion of the PL, the following was stated:

- All delegates reported that PL event improved their knowledge of mathematics and numeracy.
- Many delegates (88%) reported that engagement with mathematics and numeracy PL enhanced their knowledge and skills and agreed that it was appropriate to their needs and skill level.
- Many participants (79%) anticipated the PL would have an impact on learners in their setting, and over half (58%) plan to meet with senior leaders to discuss the professional learning.

Bespoke support for mathematics and numeracy is available to all schools and clusters/groups of schools. During 2022-2023, CSC received requests for bespoke support from 37 schools in RCT related to this Area.

A dedicated online community for mathematics and numeracy continues to provide the opportunity for practitioners from across the CSC region to meet and share their practice and to develop their understanding of local, region and national priorities related to mathematics and numeracy.

Cross regional working with the mathematics and numeracy teams from across Wales develops widescale shared understanding of progression and the five proficiencies within mathematics and numeracy and informs the creation of the regional PL offer.

6.5.4   Digital Learning

CSC continues to offer a comprehensive range of PL opportunities to all schools in enabling learners to be confident users of a range of technologies, from which they can apply and develop digital competence and proficiencies across all Areas.

PL opportunities also supported practitioners to develop the effective use of technology to enhance learning and teaching.

441 delegates from 143 (37%) schools in the region engaged in digital learning PL programmes, events, conferences, assignments, and networks. This included 133 delegates from 48 (41%) of schools in RCT.

Engagement in CSC Digital Learning PL opportunities 2022-2023

RCT	Regional PL (excl. networks)	Regional networks	Regional funded collaboration projects
No of practitioners	103	30	12
No of schools	35	23	8
% of schools	30.4%	20%	7%

In evaluations completed by practitioners upon completion of the PL, the following was stated:

- Many practitioners (88%) intend to share their PL with colleagues, and many (84%) also state their intention to discuss PL with senior leaders in their schools.

- Most participants (93%) reported the PL enhanced their knowledge of the subject matter. Many (86%) reported that the PL was appropriate to needs and skill level, and that it was relevant to their daily role.

- Many practitioners (77%) planned to use what they had learned in their roles and most (93%) reported that the PL would lead to at least some change in their practice.

Bespoke support for digital learning is available to all schools and clusters/groups of schools. During 2022-2023, CSC received requests for bespoke support from 15 schools in RCT related to this area.

There are two dedicated PL areas on the CSC website for schools to access a wide variety of high-quality PL opportunities, networks, resources and support in Digital Competence and Digital Learning.

Leaders and practitioners are encouraged to work together through networks and funded projects, leading to peer-to-peer learning, sharing of best practices, resources, and innovative ideas for incorporating cross-curricular digital skills across the curriculum.

Partnerships with external organisations and industry professionals provide valuable opportunities for real-world application of digital skills and the promotion of the Hwb platform.

CSC actively supports the cross-regional digital learning team who have developed collectively a national resource to further support schools plan for progression in cross-curricular digital skills. This strengthens the regional PL offer and promotion of the Hwb platform.

6.5.5   Cymraeg - Welsh in Education

Developing Welsh continues as a key priority for CSC and is essential in realising Our national mission: High standards and aspirations for all; Cymraeg 2050: A Million Welsh Speakers and the ambitious individual Local Authority Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESP) for 2022-2032.

Since September 2022, high-quality PL and support for Welsh at CSC is provided within 3 areas:

- Welsh Development - Leadership of Welsh to include Welsh ethos, heritage and culture in both Welsh and English Medium schools, and special schools/PRUs. Developing the use of informal Welsh through the Siarter Iaith framework and Welsh across the curriculum in English medium schools.
- Welsh Language Professional Learning – Supporting schools to plan Welsh language PL for practitioners strategically, and to report on practitioner Welsh language competence in the School Workforce Annual Census (SWAC) accurately. Developing the Welsh language skills of all practitioners and providing post-sabbatical support.
- Language, Literacy and Communication (LLC): Cymraeg - PL and support for the teaching and learning of oracy, reading, writing along with curriculum development in Welsh and English medium schools. The cross-curricular skill of literacy (Welsh) in Welsh medium schools.
- All Cymraeg PL, support and resources from CSC can be found in this playlist.

Welsh Development

The leadership of Cymraeg is central to the CSC vision which is anchored in the progressive implementation of Siarter Iaith / Siarter Iaith Cymraeg Campus across all schools. A variety of PL programmes, networks and resources were provided to support schools to implement the Siarter Iaith Framework in all sectors, including special schools. Collaboration is key and effective practice is recognised and shared. CSC works in partnership with practitioners to enrich the PL opportunities, e.g., creation of resources, sharing schools' practice, etc.

All schools have access to bespoke support to make progress along the Siarter Iaith Framework. Schools work towards progressive bronze, silver and gold awards and there is a clear verification process which is led by CSC officers and/or trained peer verifiers. There are clear guidelines for the verification process and successes are celebrated in a Regional Awards Ceremony.

A successful Dragons' Den project was funded with the aim of engaging Criw Cymraeg. An example of the impact of the project can be seen here.

Siarter Iaith / Siarter Iaith Cymraeg Campus Awards 2022-2023

	Bronze	Silver	Gold
CSC	47	28	8
RCT	14	8	5

During 2022-2023, 257 delegates from 155 (41%) schools in the region engaged in Welsh development PL programmes, events, conferences, assignments, and networks. This included 66 delegates from 44 (38%) schools in RCT.

Engagement in CSC Welsh development PL opportunities in 2022-2023

RCT	Regional PL (excl. networks)	Regional networks	Regional funded collaboration projects
No of practitioners	22	44	13
No of schools	16	35	13
% of schools	14%	30%	11%

Bespoke support for Welsh development is available to all schools and clusters/groups of schools. During 2022-2023, CSC received requests for bespoke support from 20 (11%) schools in RCT related to this area. In addition to this specific bespoke support, CSC provides regular guidance and support for schools to implement and make progress with Siarter Iaith / Siarter Iaith Cymraeg Campus.

The Leadership of Welsh Programme continued to be offered during 2022-2023. It is designed to support senior leaders to develop the Welsh language and culture on a whole school strategic level. 16 schools across the region participated in this programme, four from RCT.

In the programme evaluations,

- Most stated that they have a clear pathway for developing the Welsh Language, heritage and culture appropriate to their context.
- Most graded the degree to which the programme extended their skills and knowledge as 5/5.
- Most rated the professional learning as 5/5.
- Most stated that they have a robust understanding to lead Welsh successfully across their school and report that it will impact upon practice and behaviour.

CSC funds a collaboration project between Welsh and English medium schools focused on the development of pupil's oracy skills and use of incidental and informal Welsh. During 2022-2023, 17 schools in the region participated in this project, including five from RCT. Nearly all schools that participated in the project stated that it supported their PL positively as

practitioners and is beginning to improve pupils' Welsh oracy skills. Many schools report that they plan to continue collaborating beyond this funded project.

Welsh language professional learning

During 2022-2023, CSC continued to provide a range of Welsh language PL for practitioners in line with the Welsh Language Competency Framework. This included PL programmes, events and assignments.

783 delegates from 186 (49%) schools in the region engaged in Welsh language PL. This included 347 delegates from 51 (44%) schools in RCT.

In programme evaluations, most practitioners state that Welsh language PL will improve their Welsh language competence and skills and will change their behaviours and classroom practice.

Engagement in CSC Welsh language PL opportunities 2022-2023

RCT	Regional PL (excl. networks)	Regional networks	Regional funded collaboration projects
No of practitioners	347		1
No of schools	51	n/a	1
% of schools	44%		1%

Bespoke support for Welsh language PL is available to all schools and clusters/groups of schools. During 2022-2023, CSC received requests for bespoke support from 7 (6%) of schools in RCT related to this area.

CSC works in partnership with the Sabbatical Scheme and Welsh Government to recruit practitioners strategically. During 2022-2023, 22 teachers from the CSC region participated in various sabbatical scheme courses, including nine from schools in RCT. Post sabbatical support is provided by CSC to maximise the impact of practitioners upon their return to school e.g., introduction for headteachers, network meetings, one-to-one sessions, leadership of Welsh programme and collaboration opportunities.

Nearly all practitioners state that the sabbatical scheme has significantly developed their Welsh language competence along with their pedagogical knowledge of effective language teaching.

Languages, Literacy and Communication (LLC): Cymraeg
CSC PL intends to ensure that all learners in English medium schools develop their language skills with a view to speaking Welsh with confidence on completing statutory education. For Welsh medium schools, the intention is to support schools with the provision of Welsh literacy, ensuring that all learners develop their listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills in Welsh to access the breadth of a school's curriculum, and develop communication skills that enable them to adapt and thrive in a modern Wales.

- 39 practitioners from 26 English medium schools in the region engaged in LLC: Cymraeg PL for English medium schools. This included 21 practitioners from 15 schools in RCT. Additionally, 17 schools requested bespoke support.
- 85 practitioners from 31 Welsh medium schools in the region engaged in LLC: Cymraeg PL for Welsh medium schools. This included 18 practitioners from 9 schools in RCT. Additionally, 7 schools requested bespoke support.
- 11 practitioners from 3 schools in the region engaged in LLC: Cymraeg PL for dual language schools. This included 8 practitioners from 2 schools in RCT. Additionally, 1 school requested bespoke support.

The CSC Continuum of Welsh Language Patterns has been developed in accordance with CfW guidance and offers schools a linguistic foundation for designing their school level curriculum for Welsh in English medium schools. This continuum is a series of progressive and developmental language patterns. It has been divided into Progression Steps 1 to 3 in line with the Curriculum for Wales. Language patterns develop within each progression step as well as from one step to the next.

The continuum was piloted with six schools across the region during 2022-2023. Pontygwaith Primary School participated in this pilot. Feedback on the continuum was very positive, for example:

" We found it so easy to use. The hyperlinks are genius, and the appendices are so useful for both staff and pupil knowledge. It's going to make teaching & learning Welsh more accessible and improve teacher confidence. Diolch yn fawr".

" Although we only used the document for a short period of time towards the end of the year, all staff in PS2 and PS3 were very positive about it and expressed relief, to see a layout and structure that worked for everyday classroom practise with more scaffold for not only children but staff too. A very positive initial response".

From September 2023, the continuum will be available to support all schools in the region and beyond.

Network meetings for practitioners operate at a regional and cross regional level, designed in partnership with school-based lead practitioners where appropriate. In addition, CSC facilitates support for each local authority's immersion centre through termly network meetings.

Funded regional collaboration projects enabled schools to engage with co-construction of PL, which in turn forms part of the asynchronous offer to all schools in the region. A range of schools from CSC, including Ysgol Dolau Primary School, Pontygwaith Primary School and Y Pant School collaborated to produce exemplified support and guidance for the teaching of Welsh in an English medium school. Participating schools, indicated that they developed an improved understanding of effective curriculum design for pedagogy and language learning. Schools also fed back that the project impacted positively on both standards and engagement, for example:

"*The children have developed a much greater passion for learning Welsh, our culture and our country. The children use Welsh naturally around the school and enjoy listening to Welsh music artists. The whole school environment has become passionate about and promotes the development of the Welsh language".*

"Confidence of teachers has grown in using the games and any barriers to playing the yard games have been removed, opportunities to play the games are regularly provided. Noticeable enjoyment of children engaging with the Welsh language through games. Criw Cymraeg enjoyed giving responsibility for the project and then seeing the positive impact on their peers' enjoyment and Welsh language skills".

6.5.6   Other Curriculum Areas

During 2022-2023, PL and bespoke support continued to be available from CSC to schools in all other areas of the curriculum, including:

- Expressive arts.
- Humanities.
- Health and well-being.
- Science and technology.
- Relationships and sexuality education.
- Religion, values, and ethics.
- Careers and work-related experiences.

6.5.7   Qualifications and Post-16 Education

Secondary schools are supported to develop their curriculum for current GCSE/level 2 and A-Level/level 3 qualifications through regional networks. Many networks are facilitated by Lead practitioners from across the region and encourage the sharing of practice. Bespoke support is also available to all schools in the region where qualifications improvement priorities are not fully met by the available networks. Qualifications reform updates, opportunities for school participation and consultation communications from Qualifications Wales and WJEC were shared to all schools and cascaded through network conversations. CSC area leads and representatives from schools across the region participated in stakeholder groups to support the development of the new Made-For-Wales GCSEs. This work will continue into the next academic year as specifications are developed. In collaboration with WJEC, CSC will support ongoing PL requirements for leaders and practitioners for the revised specifications.

PL and bespoke support continued to be available to all schools with sixth forms across the region. During 2022-2023, CSC PL focused on a culture of enquiry and collaboration to drive self-improvement in post-16 settings. Key areas included curriculum offer, self-evaluation, transition, retention, well-being, and learner progress.

Engagement in Post-16 PL 2022-2023

RCT	Regional PL Post 16	Regional PL Welsh Bacc.	Regional funded collaboration projects	National PL/Projects Post-16
No of practitioners	19	6	13	5
No of schools	5	3	8	5

Through the funded project work, collaborating schools reported successful improvements in relation to the implementation of VESPA (Vision, Effort, Systems, Practice, Attitude) approaches to improve self-regulation and metacognition strategies and support learner progress and attainment. Bilingual resources were also developed via the project work to support all schools across Wales accessing the VESPA platform. Planning for learner well-being has been supported through the inclusion of the Mental Health UK Bloom project.

The Post-16 leaders network continues to be well-attended and supports schools' broader awareness of national and regional priorities in the sector. Schools are encouraged to share approaches and effective practice during the sessions. 51 delegates from 19 schools in the region engaged in this network. This included 14 delegates from four schools in RCT.

The Welsh Baccalaureate/Skills Challenge Certificate network meetings were available for all qualification levels. 27 delegates from 13 schools in the region engaged in this network. This included six delegates from three schools in RCT. WJEC regional support officers attended CSC meetings to share updates and resources, and support qualification reform. Bespoke support was available in this area through the appointed CSC Welsh Baccalaureate/Skills Challenge Certificate lead practitioner.

The Post-16 Education: Newly Qualified Teacher Module (NQT) has been created cross regionally as an optional module for the National NQT induction programme. The module highlights how post-16 education differs from other phases of education, the key priorities for this phase of education and the importance of effective transition (post-16 and post-18) to support learner aspiration and destinations. This is hosted on the Welsh Consortia website.

CSC takes a lead role in the cross-regional PL programme. The National Post-16 Leadership Development Programme attracts aspiring, new and established post-16 leaders from across Wales, where 12 CSC school leaders have enrolled for 2023-24 to date. A joint Post-16 PL programme has also been developed to reflect national priorities and collaboration across Wales which will begin in the 2023-24 academic year.

7.0   Equity and Vulnerable Learners

Central South Consortium continues to work in partnership with local authorities and other stakeholders to support equity in all schools across the region, with high standards and aspirations for all. A key driver to this work is the fostering of effective partnership with key stakeholders across the local authorities to support schools work on areas including attendance, exclusions, looked after children and well-being.

CSC has also worked effectively with the Implementation Lead for the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board on supporting schools in their work on the 'Framework on embedding a whole-

school approach to emotional and mental wellbeing'. CSC have also delivered professional learning sessions for governors to support the understanding of the requirements for the schools in adopting the statutory framework. 46 governors from RCT attended these sessions.

CSC has facilitated PL sessions focused on equity and vulnerable learners. This included within the professional pathway's programmes, including Aspiring Headteacher and Aspiring Higher Level Teaching Assistant Development programmes.

The Lead for Well-being and Vulnerable Groups continues to provide bespoke support to individual schools and clusters focused on equity and vulnerable learners.

The Lead for Well-being and Vulnerable Groups continues to provide bespoke support to individual schools and clusters focused on equity and vulnerable learners.

CSC receives PDG Grant funding for the following areas:
- Looked after Children aged 3- 15
- PDG Adviser
- Consortia Led Funding

Previously, CSC has provided regional PL opportunities specifically aimed to support Looked After Children. However, since 2022, this funding has been allocated to the individual LAs to provide bespoke professional learning for schools focusing specifically on the needs of that LA. This ensures local knowledge of the needs of schools in LAs is provided and removes any duplication of support.

7.1   Enabling Equity and Excellence

The CSC 'Enabling Equity and Excellence' document aims to promote thought and discussion amongst a school community, to ask pertinent questions as to how equitable the organisation is, and how effective it is in transforming policy into practice to ensure excellence for all learners. All schools must ask:
• Do we know every learner well?
• How do we know about them?
• What experiences, knowledge and skills do they bring?

Over 70% of school in the region have reported engagement with the document to support their school improvement.

During 2022-2023, CSC led a collaboration project involving 11 schools from across the five local authorities focusing on an element of enabling equity and excellence linked to their school improvement priorities. Treorchy Comprehensive School, Alaw Primary School and Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda participated in this structured programme which included face-to-face PL sessions, intersessional tasks and some peer reviews. The pilot supported schools to manage change according to their individual contexts, draw on the expertise and support of CSC and the LAs, and learn from the experiences of other schools in the mission to achieve equity and excellence for all learners. The work of the pilot group was also instrumental in supporting and informing the work of CSC in supporting equity in schools and driving transformational change across the organisation.

7.2   Pupil Development Grant (PDG)

April 2022 – March 2023, the PDG was allocated to schools at a rate of £1,150 per learner to support:

- Learners who are eligible for free school meals (e-FSM) and who are educated in maintained schools.
- Eligible learners aged 3 and 4 years old educated in maintained schools.
- Eligible learners who are singly registered in pupil referral units (PRUs) and education other than at school (EOTAS).
- Eligible learners in early years settings where the Foundation Phase is delivered.
- Looked after children, and former looked after children who have been adopted from care or who are subject to a special guardianship or residence order aged 3-15.

The allocations were based on Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) 2021.

All schools continue to be supported by their Improvement Partner (IP) to ensure that the PDG plan/strategy is appropriate and meets the bespoke needs of their eFSM learners and in accordance with the eight focus areas stated in the Welsh Government Guidance:

- High quality learning and teaching - with a particular focus on the pedagogy used by teachers, the role of support staff and the professional learning provided for practitioners.
- Community schools - with a particular emphasis on the role of Family Engagement Officers, the role of the school within the wider community and work with other children's and family agencies.
- Early childhood education and care, developing the long-term vision to ensure equity and quality for our youngest learners wherever they access education or care which supports their learning and development.
- The health and well-being of children and young people - in line with the Framework on Embedding a Whole-School Approach to Emotional and Mental Well-being.
- Developing high aspirations through strong relationships - aligned to the role of the Careers Service, the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework, the Young Person's Guarantee, and the Seren Network.
- The Curriculum for Wales and qualifications - focusing on the importance of language development, meta-cognition and self-regulation as being key enablers of success within the new curriculum and offering learners a wide range of qualification routes.
- Leadership - focusing on its importance in overcoming the impact of poverty on attainment and the leadership of community schools.
- Post-16 progression- through forging strong partnerships with further education institutions, work-based learning providers and other post-16 providers.

Summary of the analysis of PDG plans/strategies of schools within RCT for 2022-2023 (not including schools who did not engage with their IP due to action short of strike).

- Many schools (75%) have an appropriate PDG plan / strategy that meets the needs of eFSM learners across the school. In a minority (25%), the plans are deemed as developing.

- Most schools (92%) report that the PDG plan resulted in changes in practices or provision. A few schools (8%) report that the grant has not resulted in any changes in practice or provision.
- Many schools in (75%) report that the PDG plan has been effective in improving learner well-being. A minority of schools (25%) report that this aspect is developing.
- Over half (58%) schools report that the PDG funding has been effective in improving achievement of eFSM pupils. In around half of schools (42%), this aspect is developing.
- Many schools (75%) report that their self-evaluation and MER activities support vulnerable learner progress. In a minority (28%) schools, this aspect is developing.
- Many schools (71%) report that the teaching and learning of vulnerable pupils is effective. A minority (29%) report that the teaching and learning of vulnerable pupils is developing.
- A majority of schools (63%) report that they are taking steps to be poverty aware, and a majority (33%) state that these aspects are developing. Very few (4%) are in need of support.
- Many schools (71%) report that they are effective in addressing the attendance and exclusion needs of eFSM pupils. A few (21%) schools report that this aspect is developing. In a very few schools (8%) this aspect is an area that requires support.

Strong practice noted included:

- Effective use of Family Liaison Officers to work with targeted families.
- Graduated systems in place when attendance is below average.
- Bespoke programmes and intervention to avoid excluding vulnerable groups.
- Careful monitoring of pupil attendance.
- Staff accessing professional learning.

CSC continues to work with the LA leads for looked after children (LAC), including the virtual headteachers and the LAC Coordinators, to support the planning and evaluation of the PDG LAC grant. Looked After Children in Education (LACE) meetings have taken place regularly. In response to feedback from cluster leads, amendments have been made to LAC cluster plans and evaluations.

CSC facilitated LA cluster leads meetings within each LA to identify PL needs. As part of the quality assurance processes the CSC Lead ensured that all cluster plans had been received and approved. This process will continue in 2023-24.

7.3   Raising the Attainment of Disadvantaged Youngsters (RADY)

A significant number of disadvantaged learners in the region are not realising their potential outcomes. In 2021/22, following discussions with the local authority, CSC engaged Challenging Education to facilitate the RADY Programme in targeted schools. Ferndale Community School and Treorchy Comprehensive School have participated in this programme.

RADY is a support programme for schools to mitigate the impact of poverty and disadvantage for identified learners through an equity approach. The principles of RADY support the

regional approach to achieving equity as set out in CSC's Enabling Equity and Excellence document, and links to the Equity and Well-being priority area of CSC's business plan.

The RADY programme has also supported RCT's improvement priority, 'ensuring equity and support for vulnerable learners and their families'.

RADY is a long-term school improvement strategy. It facilitates cultural change, a hearts and minds approach. It focuses on supporting schools to become equitable in all aspects of the education they provide, ensuring that those learners who need it most get the extra support required to succeed.

RADY consists of a range of strategies which focus on disadvantage and disadvantaged pupils in schools. These start with what Challenging Education term the 'uplift', a mechanism for raising the targets, and subsequently the aspirations, set for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. This catalyst is applied at the start of a phase of education, supporting long-term strategies to ensure the 'extra' makes life-changing differences to these pupils.

After applying the catalyst, schools on their RADY journey integrate the RADY principles as a 'golden thread' through their school development plan. This is to ensure that equity is embedded in all aspects of school life, ensuring every member of staff has an understanding and commitment to an equitable approach.

All participating schools have received visits from RADY consultants. The consultants work with senior leaders in each school to develop the conditions required for effective cultural, policy and practice change to affect equitable provision and outcomes for all learners.

All schools in the RADY programme also have access to an online suite of practical resources, 'Thinking Differently'. These resources on the areas of pedagogy, metacognition, and family and community engagement aimed specifically at eFSM learners. These resources are also available to all schools across the authority.

To date, impact has been recognised in the participating schools where the school leadership is strong and stable. In these schools, leaders have the demonstrated the vision, drive, commitment, and capacity to engage purposefully with RADY, and enact the RADY principles to provide equitable experiences for disadvantaged learners. It is reported that as a result, the culture and ethos of the school has been affected powerfully by the RADY programme.

8.0   CSC CONTRIBUTION TO SUPPORTING LA PRIORITIES (APRIL 2022 – OCTOBER 2022)

As part of CSC's business planning process, RCT provides CSC with their priorities in the Spring Term 2021, and these were built into CSC's business plan for 2022/23. As agreed by CSC's Joint Committee, CSC provide an update on progress supporting RCT's priorities on a twice-yearly basis.
(See Appendix B for a detailed evaluation of the progress that has been made towards RCT's priorities)

9.0   VALUE FOR MONEY

The consortium's funding is made up of two principal sources:

- Core LA Funding with individual LA contributions.
- Dedicated funding for schools and school improvement activities routed through consortia by WG. Major WG grants, such as the Regional Consortia School Improvement grant (RCSIG), are administered by consortia and delegated to schools via LAs. Consortia retain elements of the grants (amounts set in the terms and conditions of each grant) on a regional basis to support local and national school improvement priorities.

9.1   Efficient Use of Core Contributions

In line with the legal agreement between the five local authorities making up Central South Consortium, LAs commission CSC to provide a school improvement service predominantly funding Improvement Partners to work with schools.

In 2022-23, the consortium received £3,624,875 contributions from the five LAs across the region. The funding was used to support the core function of school improvement. The budget provided to CSC by RCT represents 0.4 % of RCT's total education budget in 2022/23 and 2.4% of the budget retained by the LA.

During 2022/23 RCT LA contributed £976,904 core funding to CSC. This core funding is determined using the Indicator Based Assessment for education (IBA) and agreed by Joint Committee. In 2022/23, RCT contributed 27% of CSC's core budget.

For every £1 of core budget received from LAs, 71 pence is spent on front-line delivery.

To realise our joint ambitions for the region's learners, the core funding provided by LAs is used to provide:

- Principal Improvement Partners (LA)
- Improvement Partners
- Business Intelligence Unit (BIU)
- Information Management
- Communications Team
- Governor Support
- Finance Team
- Outdoor Education
- SACRE (Standing Advisory Councils for Religious Education)
- Project Management

Summaries of the work provided in the areas listed above to support Cardiff and Cardiff schools, can be found here.

9.2   Local Authority Annex

During the 2022-23 financial year, the RCT LA Annex Total Budget of £33,957 was used for the following priorities:

- To strengthen and further consolidate CfW development across RCT schools through exemplification of strong practice.

Evaluation of Impact

The impact of this work led to strengthened collaborative working between the eight schools involved in the CfW project which was shared more widely at a 'good practice' conference for RCT's Primary Headteachers. It also positively impacted upon curriculum planning, pedagogy, and practice and the second year of this project will give further opportunity for the development of assessment approaches involving both primary and secondary schools.

For the 2023-24 financial year, the RCT LA Annex Total Budget of £26,117 is targeted to meet the following priority:

'Supporting Educational settings to deliver a transformational curriculum, high quality teaching and learning and improved outcomes for all for the AoLE of Health and Wellbeing.'

Outcome Measures

- Strong collaboration, planning and partnership working to provide a clear evidence base for sharing the impact of the schools' work more widely.
- Models of strong emerging practice are disseminated across all schools within the cluster, enabling school leaders to apply principles and processes to influence, shape and refine their approaches to the Health and Wellbeing AOLE.
- To develop the curriculum planning at across the schools including strengthening the skills of the AoLE Leads.
- To share good practice across LA, to improve awareness and understanding that informs better lifestyle choices.
- Development of a provision plan related to health literacy that compliments school programme and includes contributions from different health / education partners and agencies.

9.3   Added Value: Grant Funding

LAs fund the core budget for CSC and this represents less than 4% of the total budget available to CSC in 2022-2023. Additional funding is received from Welsh Government via specific grant funding streams. With the launch of the national strategy, 'Education for Wales: Our National Mission', WG streamlined the grant funding processes. During 2022-2023, only three grants were received by consortia: Regional Consortia School Improvement Grant (RCSIG), Pupil Development Grant (PDG), and Siarter Iaith.

CSC adds value to the school improvement service commissioned by LAs by using elements of the above grants to fund CSC's delivery strategy of the Central South Wales Challenge as well as commission work and support packages for schools across the region. These funds are allocated according to the needs of individual schools, LAs, the region and nationally (as outlined in section 6.0 above) and are provided by the curriculum and professional learning team.

In 2022-23, the following funding was received:

Table 6: WG Grant Funding

Grant	Total	Delegated to LAs/schools	Centrally retained
	£	£	£
RCSIG	48,891	43,687	5,204
Siarter Iaith	43,484	43,174	310
PDG	78	0	78
Total	**92,453**	**86,861**	**5,592**

Elements of the above grants were used to commission work and support packages for schools across the region. These funds were allocated according to the needs of individual schools, LAs, the region and nationally. Initiatives have been split below across the key enabling objectives included in the WG 'Education in Wales: Our National Mission' report:

Table 7: Expenditure of the Regional Consortia School Improvement Grant by LA in 2022-23

Cost Category	Outturn 2022-23		City & County of Cardiff	Bridgend CBC	Vale of Glam CBC	Merthyr CBC	RCT CBC
			£	£	£	£	£
			36.59	15.29	14.83	6.33	26.96
Curriculum & assessment	0		0	0	0	0	0
Developing a high-quality education profession	38,301		12,917	4,827	5,914	4,829	9,815
Leadership	172		27	36	39	22	48
Strong and inclusive schools committed to excellence equity & wellbeing	43,174		19,795	5,889	3,350	2,071	12,069

Supporting a self-improving system	5,214		1,784	826	788	344	1,471
Total	**86,861**		**24,524**	**11,578**	**10,090**	**7,266**	**23,403**
% spend received			**39.75**	**13.33**	**11.62**	**8.37**	**26.94**

Bespoke Support Budget

An additional bespoke support budget has been created to provide supplementary support to schools. Improvement Partners are able to coordinate support for schools that are most in need, examples of support may include a Regional Leader for Governance or a System Leader for a specific number of days, supply cover to release staff for professional learning or funding for a lead practitioner.

During 2022/2023 a budget of just over £145k was available to support schools across the region. Schools within RCT LA received £67,336 of the available budgets representing 46.2% of the total budget available.

The impact of the activities funded by this budget is evaluated by the school and the individual Improvement Partner, and, where appropriate, included within local authority information reports.

An example of the additional support provided by CSC in this regard is the deployment of a Regional Leader for Governance (RLG) for one of RCT's primary schools. An experienced chair of Governors acting as an RLG worked with the school's governing body to:

- *Support an overall review of process and practice of the governing body.*
- *Develop the governing body's role in the processes of self-evaluation and improvement planning.*
- *Support the recently appointed chair of governors.*

As part of responding to Estyn's Inspection recommendation to, "R1 Improve the effectiveness of leadership at all levels, including that of the governing body", the support provided by the RLG empowered the school to develop its capacity over a period of a year forming clear designated sub committees that rationalised and prioritised areas of the post inspection action plan. These sub committees and the full governing body have met across several times across the academic year. The structures and the impact of the governing body continues to improve and add effective challenge and support to the school leadership.

As a result, the staff are now supported and challenged by a stronger governing body who have strengthened their own systems to allow the wider identification of members strengths to further support the school. These actions at a strategic level have positively impacted on pupil outcomes through clear self-evaluation processes that have allowed identification and planning for the pupils needs.

Curriculum Reform and Development

CSC supports schools in all areas of curriculum reform with the aim of realising our National Mission of 'strong and inclusive schools committed to excellence equity and wellbeing'. This includes working with the other regional consortia and partnerships, local authorities,

external agencies, and schools to develop national and regional events, programmes, support and guidance for practitioners and school, leaders, including governors.

The PL opportunities are wide ranging and comprehensive, with Curriculum for Wales embedded throughout. The CSC team provide and broker specialist bespoke support to clusters, groups of schools and individual schools to meet their specific improvement needs.

9.4   Collaborative Advantage

This can be defined as the additional benefits of working as a region when compared to working at either local authority or individual school level. By working collectively, schools have been able to build capacity within the system by training staff and sharing practice.

The Central South Wales Challenge (CSWC) is a partnership of all schools in the region working together to develop a self-improving system. This is based on improvement being driven for schools by schools. It provides delivery structures and networks through which most regional professional learning opportunities are offered.

Collaborative working underpins the CSWC. Cluster working has formed a significant workstream for all area this year in line with the requirements of the Curriculum for Wales. This has facilitated collaborations between schools and built significant capacity within those clusters that have engaged. There are multiple examples of where lead practitioners have been used effectively to support the system and provide additional capacity. In nearly all cases, projects have led to improvements for at least the practitioners/schools involved, and in the best cases, offered resource to the region overall.

However, significant budgetary pressures and capacity of schools are becoming an increasing barrier to collaborative working.

Specific details regarding the engagement of RCT schools with the CSWC can be found in section 6.0.

9.5   Additional Examples of Value for Money

In addition to how CSC provides evidence of the efficient use of resources as well as how added value and collaborative advantage are supported, CSC is also able to provide evidence of value for money in several other areas.

In addition to how CSC provides evidence of the efficient use of resources as well as how added value and collaborative advantage are supported, CSC is also able to provide evidence of value for money in several other areas.

Equity

CSC provides a universal service to all schools which includes:

- A named Improvement Partner who monitors and reviews the progress of each individual school against their agreed evidence-based improvement criteria.
- All schools will be identified as needing core or enhance support. Enhanced support offers additional monitoring and review for schools that have specific challenges.
- IPs broker and monitor any additional support ensuring that all schools have the right support to address their needs as well and prevent any potential issues from impacting on learners.
- Support for governors to carry out HT performance management in line with national guidance.
- Governors have access to all mandatory training, and this is supported by additional training and support. The role of Governors across CSC has been enhanced with the reestablishment of the Governors Steering Group on our governance structure and the establishment of Regional Leaders of Governance.
- Additional support and training is provided to IPs to ensure they can reach the internationally recognised AOEA standards, demonstrating that our staff have the skills, knowledge, and experience to support schools.
- In addition, where further support is required (either identified by CSC, the LA or Estyn, a tiered package of further improvement challenge and monitoring will be provided depending on the level of concern registered. This additional intervention will be focused on schools in most need of support irrespective of in which authority they reside.
- IPs coordinate and broker the support going into schools ensuring that it is appropriate to need and that it is addressing a key school/departmental priority.
- School progress is monitored termly in all schools and half termly in schools with additional concerns.

Economy

The national model of regional working was published in 2015 and recommended CSC receive £5.4m to fund the school improvement serviced on behalf of the five LAs. In 2022/23 CSC budget was £3.6m

CSC have worked to ensure that costs are minimised without reducing the quality of service provided. Over the period since the inception of CSC, further efficiency savings have been identified, enabling core contributions to CSC to be reduced without affecting the quality of service provided.

All curriculum & professional learning areas can offer assurance of their financial spend and a clear rationale for decisions. These spends are carefully monitored through CSC area operational plans and robust financial processes. All area leads carefully manage their resources to balance the needs of the system, to be as strategic and proactive as possible whilst ensuring the ability to be agile to respond to PL and support needs as they arise.

Some recurrent bespoke support has been shaped into programmes demonstrating that evaluation is being used to shape future work and best manage human resource to create greater economy.

There are many examples where regional collaboration projects have offered highly effective professional learning and provided learning and resource for the system suggesting effective spend of resource to provide greater economy.

However, significant budgetary pressures may become a barrier to delivery of a comprehensive offer and funding for regional collaborative activities.

Sustainability

The definition of sustainable is something that can be continued or a practice that can be maintained over time once the resource from CSC (whether financial or leadership) is removed. CSC has developed a sustainable strategy for collaboration in the Central South Wales Challenge (CSWC).

There is a significant amount of high-quality PL and support at the point of delivery, both in intensive and less intensive forms. All areas can detail strong examples of intensive forms of PL and support that have developed capacity of practitioners and groups of practitioners within a school or cluster. In the bespoke support, coaching or mentoring ensures that action is taken as a result of the professional learning, though this is either less developed in the less intensive forms or less known about. When practitioners are supported to apply their learning, the feedback is consistently positive.

Leadership is often the main development need and relies upon middle leaders operating in a wider learning organisation for changes to be realised. To ensure sustainability, a further focus on the development of knowledge and skills of middle leaders is required to lead change following their engagement in PL and support.

Efficiency

As a region, CSC is able to take advantage of economies of scale and can therefore provide a full and comprehensive professional learning offer across all areas of school improvement. In addition, CSC is provided with Welsh Government grant funding to ensure full coverage of support across all AoLEs within the new curriculum.

The website developed by CSC ensures schools have access to resources and a comprehensive professional learning offer in one site. This is complemented by the website specifically for Curriculum for Wales which can be accesses from the main CSC website.

A comprehensive communication strategy is also in place to ensure schools receive timely and appropriate communications aligned to need.

A strength of the PL offered to schools is the wide range of PL and support opportunities - programmes, projects, networks and bespoke support - available to all practitioners and school leaders across the region. In addition, the breadth of topics on offer receives positive feedback. Practitioners report that they value the range and breadth of PL that they can engage with which implies efficiency in terms of scope and scale. A summary of the support provided to the region can also be found in the [professional learning compendium.](professional learning compendium)

All CSC areas can clearly articulate their approach to PL, and why they have selected each aspect they have included in the offer. Strong examples of CSC self-evaluation shaping the PL offer are evident. In nearly all areas, there is clear thought about how the PL is designed to be taken to scale, either by a practitioner within a school or regionally.

Effectiveness

Within the 2022-23 Annual Financial Year Report, CSC provided evidence to support the achievement of outcomes and the impact of the work. During recent LA inspections of LAs, Estyn reported that:

"The local authority has established strong working relationships with principal improvement partners from the regional consortium and there are robust processes for the support and challenge to schools causing concern."

"…improvement partners provide a sound evaluation of progress based on first-hand evidence of provision and leadership in these schools…"

In addition, there were 592 school improvement priorities across all schools in the local authority for 2022-23.

Progress judgements for 268 priorities were not available for the Summer term 2023, with 232 progress judgements not available due to the impact of ASOS, and a further 36 priorities with no progress judgements due to these priorities no longer being applicable to the school.

300 priorities were judged to be "On-track", with 24 priorities judged as "Not on track". Of the 324 priorities with a progress judgement, 92.6% were "On-Track", with 7.4% of priorities being "Not on track".

The CSC professional learning opportunities available to all schools across the region is comprehensive and is consistently of good quality according to the National Academy for Educational Leadership (NAEL) hallmarks for professional learning. This demonstrates that the component parts of the PL offer are effective.

Evaluation from a wide variety of feedback confirms strongly that the PL opportunities provide significant school improvement opportunities through a structured and comprehensive approach. Many PL resources developed by the team across all areas well

received by schools and used to good effect, promoting efficient sharing of learning. There is more evidence of impact in the more intensive programmes of PL and bespoke support than in some of the less intensive PL opportunities (e.g. one-off events etc.). This is attributable to the proportional approach to support and evaluation in each activity. Overall, the quality of the cluster bespoke support is reported to have a significant impact on curriculum development.

CSC offers high quality PL and support, however, for this to effect school improvement, the conditions of the school need to allow this learning to be implemented by practitioners. Also, where appropriate, the learning taken to scale across departments, phases and the whole school. There is an appetite from practitioners for less intensive episodes of PL which are more time efficient to engage with but may lack depth of knowledge and skill development. This does not align to the indicators of effective professional learning.

Quality

All CSC school improvement colleagues have a depth of knowledge and expertise which is supplemented with extensive professional learning to ensure the highest quality of support to schools.

In addition, all IPs are working towards an internationally recognised AoEA standard demonstrating that CSC staff have the skills, knowledge, and experience to support schools.

To ensure the ongoing quality of this service, a comprehensive professional learning offer is in place to ensure school improvement professionals are well trained (as well as experienced) and able to support schools across the region. This is supported by an extensive quality assurance programme which feeds into the performance development or probation arrangements for individual IPs.

All PL and support is of high quality according to the NAEL hallmarks. All areas are able to demonstrate how the PL and support in their area aligns to the professional standards for teaching and leadership. Also, how the PL and support promotes and enables schools to develop as learning organisations. Academic research, coupled with organisational experience and expertise, underpins all decisions, aligned to national policy in their plans. Learning from activities is shared with practitioners who are interested and engaged in the focus areas.

Added Value

Curriculum areas enact their work as part of a longer-term strategic plan which may span multiple years as part of a coherent theory of change. For any new or innovative activity that has been developed, leads can explain how these fit within their vision and priorities for improvement. In the majority of cases there are clear examples of new strategies being used to accelerate school improvement.

However, the pressures to demonstrate significant impact on school improvement within one year can influence the planned activities. One year is often not enough time of a measure of value if work is sitting in a longer-term strategic plan.

10.0   SHARING OF PRACTICE

Sharing of practice

Consortiwm Canolbarth y De
Central South Consortium
RHONDDA CYNON TAF
Gwasanaeth Addysg ar y Cyd
Joint Education Service

Professional Learning - Sept 2022 - Aug 2023

No. of schools engaged with PL	Proportion of schools engaged with PL	No. of practitioners engaged with PL	No. of schools engaged with regional networks	Proportion of schools engaged with regional networks	No of practitioners engaged with regional networks	No of Lead Practitioners
115	100%	3018	97	84%	526	12

Estyn Inspection Reports

No. of inspections: Sept 2022 - Sept 2023	18
No. of inspections: Sept 2021 - Sept 2022	9
No. of Estyn good practice case studies: Sept 2022 - Sept 2023	2
No. of Estyn good practice case studies: Sept 2021 - Sept 2022	3

General Context Data

No. of schools in RCT LA (January PLASC 2023 & EOTAS 2023)	115
No. of teachers in RCT LA (January PLASC 2023)	2119
No. of clusters within RCT LA	18

Collaborations

No of schools engaged in funded collaboration projects (inc. Regional and National)	85
No of practitioners engaged in funded collaboration projects (inc. Regional and National)	196

Leadership

No. of participants engaged in MLDP (Middle Leaders Development Programme)	33
No. of participants engaged in SLDP (Senior Leaders Development Programme)	15
No. of participants engaged in Aspiring Headteacher Programme	27
No. of participants engaged in New and Acting Headteacher	6
No. of system leaders available from deployment from within RCT LA	6
No. of Governors engaged in Governor training (at least 1 event)	343
Total number of Governors in RCT LA	1434
No of RLGs available from deployment from within RCT LA	1

Curriculum, Teaching & Assessment PL and Support

	Regional PL (excl.networks)	Regional Networks	Regional Funded Projects	National Networks / Camau Project	Bespoke Support Requests
Practitioners	1233	511	173	56	
No of schools	108	96	83	40	99
% of schools	93.9%	83.5%	72.2%	34.8%	86.1

Sharing Practice - Sept 2022 - Sept 2023

No. of RCT schools with at least one Snippet of Success	51
No. of times RCT schools featured in Snippets of Success - our half termly celebration of news and success stories from schools in CSC	79
No. of podcasts produced: • Dwlu Darllen • Mindful Teaching and Teaching Mindfulness • Den y Dreigiau • Richard Price Tercentenary Celebration	4
No. of podcasts produced: • Data and Information Literacy Project	4

Coaching & Mentoring

No. of facilitators trained (RDG)	6
No. of teaching staff trained in coaching & mentoring (Lead Practitioner)	11

11.0 CONCLUSIONS

CSC has developed a framework for self-evaluation based upon the guidance provided by Estyn on the Inspection of Local Authorities.

As a result of extensive self-evaluation activity, including engagement with stakeholders, strengths and areas of development have been identified. From this analysis, a series of focus areas have been identified for inclusion within the planning for 2023-24.

Self-evaluation activity has continued across the organisation to ensure any areas of development identified because of evaluation activity, is incorporated into the planning cycles.

11.1 Leadership and Safeguarding within CSC as an organisation.

This area focused on the following themes and sources of evidence:

Area	Sources of Evidence
• Quality and effectiveness of leaders and manager • Self-Evaluation processes and improvement planning • Professional learning • Safeguarding • Use of resources	• Suite of Reports • Governance Reports • Consortium as a Learning Organisation / Annual Survey • Analysis of data • HR Policies • CSC PL Programmes & Evaluation • Risk Management • Internal / External Audit Reports

Strengths included:
- Leaders / Managers have established a clear vision involving all stakeholders over time, which encompasses partnership working.
- Local Authority priorities embedded into the CSC Business Plan.
- Strong strategic partnerships with stakeholders.
- Leaders incorporate feedback to improve quality of provision and processes.
- Effective induction programme results in staff being well placed to work effectively with schools.
- High expectations to engage in Professional Learning developed to support individual and regional priorities.
- Transparent robust financial management (as confirmed by Audit Wales)
- Maximisation of grant funding to schools / Regional formula for distribution of grant funding to schools.

Areas to develop included:
- Further developing professional relationships with elected members / officers in local authorities
- Embedding the evaluation framework
- Rationalisation of reporting

- Embedding risk management processes
- Promotion of equality diversity & inclusion
- Staff wellbeing & healthy cultures
- Embedding working practices and quality assurance programmes
- Evaluation, outcome and impact of internal Professional Learning and Performance Development
- Safer recruitment practices

11.2   Professional Learning

This area focused on the following themes and sources of evidence:

Area	Sources of Evidence
- Support for school improvement - Support for vulnerable learners - Design of the professional learning offer - Impact of professional learning - Support for Welsh in Education Strategic Plans	- Professional learning offer- website - Engagement spreadsheet and analysis - Bespoke support analysis and evaluations - Evaluation data summary - LA information reports / scrutiny reports - Area leads evaluations / reports - School improvement priorities - LA business plan priorities - Welsh Government policy, guidance and relevant grant terms and conditions - Recommendations from external stakeholder reports, e.g., Welsh Government, OECD, Estyn, Children's Commissioner

Strengths included:
- A broad range of relevant, evidence-informed PL opportunities responds to local, regional and national needs and along all milestones of the professional pathway.
- Bespoke support opportunities for all schools in the region to supplement available PL opportunities.
- Robust quality assurance of PL opportunities and bespoke support.
- Enabling Equity and Excellence (EEE) provides a clear regional approach with 75% reporting the document has increased their understanding of equity and excellence in the school and that it was being used to support school improvement conversations.
- Work with HEI partners ensures learning from the wider system add academic rigour to the EEE.
- Since April 2022, over 98% of schools in the region have engaged in the professional learning programme for curriculum including the wider reforms.
- CfW bespoke support for schools, clusters and individual drop-in sessions offer increased capacity for tailored support for schools.
- PL evaluations strong, with 95% of delegates already using or planning to use the learning in their current role.

- Evaluations from all leadership programmes demonstrates the positive impact on developing the leadership skills of participants and the impact on learners through the practical leadership experience tasks undertaken.
- Engagement with Welsh language development PL has increased by 20% from the previous year.
- Since April 2022, 101 schools have progressed levels for Siarter Iaith and Siarter Iaith Cymraeg Campus awards, an increase of 15% from the previous year. Since April 2020 there has been 301 progressive levels awarded.
- CSC provide strong support to local authorities as a key partner to delivering Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) targets.
- 93% of all eligible NQTs passed induction in the region in 2020/21, with 7% being given an extension and 0% failures.

Areas to develop included:
- Analysing the volume of PL available for schools and ensure effective communication of the offer.
- Ensuring coherence of PL in curriculum design, teaching and assessment.
- Developing the cluster convenor role to further support the 3 – 16 curriculum.
- Improving participation of delegates in evaluation of PL programmes and events.
- Redeveloping PL and support for Teaching Assistants across the region.
- Further development of higher-level Welsh language professional learning (gloywi iaith).
- Ensure PL opportunities are available to support all elements of the Enabling Equity and Excellence document.
- Further develop PL and support for leadership beyond the national pathway programmes.
- Develop and implement a tiered approach to governor PL that builds on knowledge, experiences and skills.
- Further develop the regional approach for coaching and mentoring.
- Continue to develop reporting on the outcomes of PL in school improvement.

11.3   Support for School Improvement

This area focused on the following themes and sources of evidence:

Area	Sources of Evidence
- Monitoring and reporting schools' progress - Providing bespoke support - Intervention in schools causing concern - Supporting vulnerable learners	- QA processes and feedback from schools - IP knowledge / SIPL entries - Estyn reports and case studies / LALI - LA reports / feedback - Suite of reports - Schools causing concern / All school risk reports. - Bespoke support plans - PDG / PDG LAC evaluations - RADY evaluation

	• EEE pilot evaluation

Strengths included:
- Skills, expertise and knowledge of CSC team.
- IPs develop strong relationships with schools to challenge and support, in partnership with local authorities.
- First-hand evidence gathering is aligned with school MER processes.
- Strong systems and processes to monitor 'schools causing concern'.
- Sharing of school level intelligence and information with LA partners identifying significant risks, concerns by exception and agreeing actions for challenge and support.
- An agile approach is used to support the needs of individual schools.
- CSC have a clear regional approach for equity and excellence.
- Nearly all schools have engaged in collaborations and/or PL for CfW.
- CSC staff engagement with schools supported schools' readiness and implementation of CfW.
- Quality of CSWC strategy supports a self-improving system across the region.

Areas to develop included:
- Continue to evaluate and refine reporting arrangements.
- Continued roll-out of the agreed EEE implementation plan.
- Continue to support schools to develop effective cluster working arrangements.
- Follow up aspects arising from quality assurance processes.
- Widen the profile of CPAG to reduce the impact of poverty across more schools.
- Further embed Welsh as part of school improvement conversations.

12.0 NEXT STEPS

As a result of all self-evaluation activity across the organisation and with stakeholders, the following areas were identified for inclusion within the Business Plan for 2023/24:

12.1 Leadership and Safeguarding within CSC as an organisation.
- Further develop professional relationships with elected members / officers in local authorities
- Embed the CSC evaluation framework.
- Rationalisation of reporting.
- Embedding risk management processes.
- Promotion of equality diversity & inclusion.
- Staff wellbeing & healthy cultures.
- Embedding working practices and QA programme.
- Evaluate the outcome and impact of internal Professional Learning and Performance Development.
- Further develop safe recruitment practices.

12.2 Professional Learning

- Analyse the volume of PL available for schools and ensure effective communication of the offer.
- Ensure coherence of PL in curriculum design, teaching and assessment.
- Develop the cluster convenor role to further support the 3 – 16 curriculums.
- Improve participation of delegates in evaluation of PL programmes and events.
- Redevelop PL and support for Teaching Assistants across the region.
- Further development of higher-level Welsh language professional learning (gloywi iaith).
- Ensure PL opportunities are available to support all elements of the Enabling Equity and Excellence document.
- Further develop PL and support for leadership beyond the national pathway programmes.
- Develop and implement a tiered approach to Governor PL that builds on knowledge, experiences, and skills.
- Further develop the regional approach for coaching and mentoring.
- Continue to develop reporting on the outcomes of PL in school improvement.

12.3 Support for School Improvement

- Continue to evaluate and refine reporting arrangements.
- Continued roll-out of the agreed EEE implementation plan.
- Continue to support schools to develop effective cluster working arrangements.
- Follow up aspects arising from quality assurance processes.
- Widen the profile of CPAG to reduce the impact of poverty across more schools.
- Further embed Welsh as part of school improvement conversations.

REGIONAL PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COLLABORATIONS

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT GROUPS (SIGS)

Cross LA school collaborations to lead professional learning and facilitate enquiry-led improvement.

CLUSTERS

Collaborations of schools within a cluster, led by a convenor. Focused on Curriculum for Wales and the wider education reforms.

SCHOOL LEADER & PRACTITIONER NETWORKS

CSC and/or school leader and practitioner facilitated networks focused on specific areas.

HER CANOL DE CYMRU

CENTRAL SOUTH WALES CHALLENGE

LEAD PRACTITIONERS

Programmes and network activities are co-constructed by school practitioners and CSC staff to meet regional and national priorities and needs.

SCHOOL TO SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships brokered by Improvement Partners focusing on specific areas of improvement. This includes experienced school practitioners, System Leaders and Regional Leaders of Governance.

PROFESSIONAL PATHWAYS

Teaching Assistant Learning Pathway (TALP)
NQT induction
Leadership development, including governors

Professional learning opportunities co-constructed and delivered by experienced school leaders and practitioners and CSC staff. These support leadership at all levels, developing knowledge, experience and skills.

REGIONAL PROFESSIONAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

RCT Strategic Priorities 2023 – 2024 (Progress against Priorities)

Strategic Priority 1:	Leadership		
Aim	**Delivery Requirements**	**Evaluation of Progress of CSC activity to support LA Priorities**	**Next Steps**
Delivering a high quality skilled educational workforce and excellent leadership at all levels	To sharpen self-evaluation and improvement planning to drive improvement.	• During Autumn term visits, Improvement Partners (IPs) are working alongside school leaders to plan and undertake self-evaluation activities. Due to the impact of ASOS, this is in different stages of development across RCT schools.	Improvement Partners to continue working alongside school leaders and staff, carrying out supported self-evaluation activity to support schools in improving standards for all learners.
	Improve the consistency and quality of delivery plans.	• IPs are working with Headteachers, SLT and governing bodies to ensure a shared understanding of progression exists within their own schools. In the best cases they are working effectively within their clusters, collaborating with other schools to ensure a wider, shared understanding of progression and sharing ideas and practices with each other. • PIPs work with LA officers on RCT's SMT to provide challenge and further evidence demonstrating impact in the LA's delivery plan priorities.	For schools to continue to review and refine their approaches to progression and their shared understanding.
	Ensure effective safeguarding arrangements.	• This is a Local Authority area of responsibility.	

	Deliver the Strategic Priorities within the WESP.	• All Welsh medium and special schools along with most English medium schools in RCT are engaged with the Siarter Iaith Cymraeg Campus Framework (Welsh Language Charter). Since April 2023, 18 schools have made progressive levels of progress within the Siarter Iaith Framework.
		• **Siarter Iaith (Welsh Medium) Data – November 2023**
		   o Primary – 3 bronze, 9 silver and 5 gold.
		   o Secondary – 1 bronze and 1 silver.
		• **Siarter Iaith Cymraeg Campus (English Medium) Data – November 2023**
		   o Primary – 42 bronze, 10 silver and 2 gold.
		   o Secondary – 3 bronze and 2 silver.
		   o Special – 3 bronze.
		• A wide range of resources have been produced for both Welsh medium, English medium and special schools to support progression towards various Siarter Iaith / Siarter Iaith Cymraeg Campus awards. The resources include examples of best practice, case studies, podcasts as well as practical resources to use with pupils. An awards ceremony was held at The All Nations Centre in Cardiff in spring 2023 to celebrate successes of schools receiving awards since March 2020.
		• Llwyfan Llafar resource with associated professional learning has been produced to support Welsh Medium schools to develop pupil's Welsh oracy skills from 3-16. Most schools state that this resource is beginning to have a positive impact on pupil's oracy skills
		• Most Welsh medium schools state that the CSC Standardised Reading Test is supporting the school's diagnostics and enabling practitioners to accurately plan teaching and interventions.
		• Rhondda Cynon Taf's Welsh language immersion provision utilises the primary resource for teaching late-comers to Welsh medium education. This is proving beneficial to support teaching and learning of Welsh.
		• A new CSC Continuum of Welsh language patterns was launched for English-medium schools in autumn 2023 along with associated professional learning. The continuum has been very well received by schools and early feedback is very positive.
		• CSC provides a range of Welsh language development professional learning (PL) for practitioners at no cost to schools. The PL is mapped against the Welsh Language Competency Framework and can be accessed in a variety of ways e.g. on demand/asynchronous and face to face. Bespoke PL is also available to individual schools or clusters. All asynchronous assignments have been revised and updated and a higher level (Gloywi Iaith) introduced as an assignment and face to face event.
			Cymraeg Strategic Advisors, Improvement Partners and Local Authority Principal Improvement Partners (LA PIPs) to continue working alongside school leaders, governors and LA officers to support schools in improving standards of Cymraeg for all learners.

| | | • 205 practitioners from Rhondda Cynon Taf have engaged in Welsh language professional learning since April 2023.
• Most practitioners state that the professional learning will improve their practice in the classroom and will make strong progress in changing their behaviours.
• CSC has created and published a [playlist](#) incorporating an explanatory video which focuses on schools' procedures for planning professional learning and accurately reporting on practitioner development in the SWAC. As of November 2023, the resource has been viewed 877 times and provides leaders with a clear understanding of the professional learning offer to support their staff's language competency development.
• 2 RCT practitioners are undertaking the two-term foundation/intermediate level Welsh Sabbatical Schemes course in 2023/24 (Dolau and Hendreforgan).
• 13 schools in RCT have engaged with bespoke Welsh language professional learning for practitioners at various levels of the Welsh Language Competency Framework since June 2023.
• CSC has funded collaboration between Welsh medium secondary schools to develop Level 2 and 3 vocational qualifications through the medium of Welsh. Vocational qualifications are now available for business, uniform protected services, medical sciences, sports coaching, leadership though sport, preparing for public services and a Level 3 childcare qualification.
• All professional learning, bespoke support and resources from CSC Cymraeg can be found in this [playlist](#). | |
| | Ensuring effective leadership and management arrangements. | • IPs and LA PIPs support the recruitment of senior leaders within RCT schools, for example, they support governing body members and LA officers shortlist candidates, plan for and provide interview questions and tasks. IPs and LA PIPs attend interviews, leading the professional interview elements of the process, and advise governing body members throughout the process.
• IPs coach and mentor school senior leaders and signpost to relevant professional learning opportunities, for example, the national pathway programme for senior and middle leaders.
• IPs support governing bodies undertake CSC's 'Self-Evaluation Toolkit for Governing Bodies' and develop an action plan following, including providing bespoke PL for governors.
• IPs and LA PIPs provide additional, bespoke, support for Headteachers and governing bodies through the recruitment of System Leaders or Regional Lead Governors through CSC's Bespoke Support Request system.
• IPs support Governing Bodies undertake the statutory Headteacher Performance Management process which includes establishing and reviewing targets throughout the year. | Improvement Partners and Local Authority Principal Improvement Partners (LA PIPs) to continue working alongside school leaders and governors, carrying out supported self-evaluation activities to support schools in improving standards for all learners. |

Strategic Priority 2:	Teaching & Learning		
Aim	**Delivery Requirements**	**Evaluation of Progress of CSC activity to support LA Priorities**	**Next Steps**
Supporting Educational settings to deliver a transformational curriculum, high quality teaching and learning and improved outcomes for all	Deliver a fully integrated cross directorate early years plan for 0–7-year-olds that ensures that learners access the right support at the right time.	• CSC's Curriculum and Professional Learning team support the development of Foundation Learning in RCT via the work of the Foundation Learning Strategic Advisor and Lead Practitioners. • In addition, practitioners working within Foundation Learning are able to access additional professional learning via CSC's professional learning compendium.	• To continue liaising with the directorate in support of this priority.
	Improve the consistency and quality of support and information provided by CSC on Leadership and Progress of all learners, to include vulnerable groups of learners.	• The Framework for School Improvement has been updated for September '23, to reflect the strengthening of processes and improved consistency. • All IPs LA PIPs are experienced, high-functioning senior leaders. They undergo a rigorous interview process prior to employment. • CSC's quality assurance processes have been strengthened, including: • CSC provide professional learning to all IPs and LA PIPs, ensuring high expectations and protocols are shared. • LA PIPs organise face to face RCT IP professional learning sessions once every half term. This is used to identify and share good practice and emerging priorities identified from across RCT and the wider national context (including Estyn reports/findings). • LA PIPs monitor the School Improvement Partnership Logs (SIPLs) and undertaken joint activities alongside IPs throughout the year. • LA PIPs undertake joint visits with IPs they line manage, enabling the LA PIP to quality assure the work of the IP, identify good practice and strengthen performance development processes. • LA PIPs hold 1:1 meetings with RCT IPs every half term and undertake internal meetings with all members of CSC working in support of specific schools. In turn, this information is shared with the Assistant Director of CSC. • The LA PIPs quality assure all LA pre-inspection reports before sharing with the LA's Head of Achievement (HoA) and Director for Education (DoE). • The LA PIP regularly meetings with the HoA and DoE to discuss vulnerable schools and emerging priorities. Both LA PIPs and HoA have agreed dates to meet throughout the academic year to share intelligence and emerging priorities for RCT schools. • LA PIPs quality assure progress review reports that are written by the IP and shared with relevant HTs, CoGB, HoA and DoE. • The development of the All-School Review have developed the IPs and LA PIPs knowledge of the work of the wider directorate in support of schools in RCT, this has strengthened the partnership. • All work undertaken by CSC and external partners in support of RCT schools is now feed directly into the SIPL, this allows SMT and LA officers direct access to the work being undertaken and its impact.	• CSC to continue reviewing and evaluating the impact of the QA processes via established systems.
	Ensure that teaching and learning in all schools and PRUs is improved and aligned with the new requirements of the AOLEs	• PL, support and guidance is available to all schools and clusters to develop curriculum, teaching and assessment. • Bespoke support is available to all schools and clusters to develop curriculum, teaching and assessment. RCT schools' engagement in Curriculum, Teaching and Assessment PL opportunities April 2023- October 2023 |	Regional PL (excl. networks)	Regional Networks	Regional Funded Projects	Bespoke Support Requests
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Practitioners	328	205	114	x
Schools	102	77	76	70	 • IPs support Headteachers and senior leaders quality assure the school's self-evaluation processes and its impact. • IPs are able to access focussed bespoke support from AOLE colleagues in the Curriculum and Professional learning team via the Bespoke Support Request system. • IPs promote collaborative work of clusters and SIGs to share good practice and moderate work.	• CSC to continue reviewing and evaluating the impact of the QA processes via established systems.

Strategic Priority 3:	Vulnerable Learners		
Aim	**Delivery Requirements**	**Evaluation of Progress of CSC activity to support LA Priorities**	**Next Steps**
Ensuring equity and support for vulnerable learners and their families	Develop the Virtual School Model for Children Looked After and evaluate its Impact	• All relevant information regarding PDG LAC shared with all clusters. Funding approved by directors September 2023. PDG support plan forwarded to Welsh Government including relevant information regarding Looked After Children. • Cluster leads meetings planned in collaboration with LA staff for September 2023. RCT Cluster leads meeting was scheduled on 29.9.23.	• Share findings from cluster leads meetings with relevant stakeholders. • Work with clusters to plan effectively in relation to the PDG LAC. • Respond to bespoke needs of cluster leads.
	Provide effective support to schools to enable them to comply with new ALN legislation and ensure learners receive high quality additional learning provision. Ensure Alternative provision is meeting the needs of learners across the Local Authority	• IPs support Headteachers and senior leaders quality assure the school's self-evaluation processes and its impact. • IPs are able to access focussed bespoke support from AOLE colleagues in the Curriculum and Professional Learning team via the Bespoke Support Request system. • IPs promote collaborative work of clusters and SIGs to share good practice and moderate work. • IPs support Headteachers and senior leaders review the impact of the teaching and learning on ALN and vulnerable learners, this is further supported through bespoke support from CSC's Curriculum Reform and Pedagogy teams. • Attendance at the All-School Review alongside LA colleagues, enable IPs to better understand the wider work being undertaken in support of schools and ALN / vulnerable learners and therefore complement this work	• CSC to continue reviewing and evaluating the impact of the QA processes via established systems.
	To promote equality and diversity to enable vulnerable & disadvantaged learners to achieve improved outcomes	• See above	• CSC to continue reviewing and evaluating the impact of the QA processes via established systems.

Strategic Priority 4:	Well-being		
Aim	**Delivery Requirements**	**Evaluation of Progress of CSC activity to support LA Priorities**	**Next Steps**
Enhancing the wellbeing of our learners and the workforce	Develop strategic approaches to supporting children and families in poverty.	• Findings of discussions between Improvement Partners and schools on the use and impact of the Pupil Development Grant (PDG) collated for 2022-23. Regional PDG evaluation presented to Welsh Government with a visit to a CSC school to exemplify effective practice. One LA report developed and disseminated with others in draft format. • Bespoke support ongoing with six schools supported across the region by the CSC Lead for Well-being and Vulnerable Learners. Support for Cardinal Newman RC Comprehensive took place during summer 2023 and this resulted in a whole school twilight session planned for October 2023. Connections made with other RCT secondary schools for further support visits to be planned. • Key messages about the PDG and Poverty shared at the Aspiring Headteachers Conference in July 2023. Attendance from 11 schools from RCT: Oaklands Primary School, Tai Educational Centre, Ysgol Gymraeg Evan James, Llantrisant Primary School, Caradog Primary School, Aberdare Community School , Hawthorn High School, Alaw Primary School, Ferndale Community School, Our Lady's R.C and Ysgol Nantgwyn. • Professional learning sessions delivered for all school facing staff on terms of conditions and expectations of PDG grant for 2023-24. Comprehensive bank of resources also shared with school facing staff to support engagement and discussions with schools. • Ongoing discussions held between Improvement Partners and school leaders on progress of vulnerable leaders with a record of progress noted at the end of the summer term and shared with Rhondda Cynon Taf in September 2023.	• Undertake twilight session with Cardinal Newman - October 2023 • Establish links with other RCT schools to provide support.
	Ensure approaches relating to children's rights are embedded across all schools	• IPs work with schools in support of embedding UNCRC's Rights of the Child approaches if applicable to their school improvement priorities. • IPs work with senior leaders to review and monitor impact across all elements of the school.	
	Further improve attendance rates, particularly for those persistent absentees, learners with SEN/ALN and eFSM learners	• Regular regional meetings continue to take place involving LA Attendance and Exclusion Leads with the CSC Lead for Well-being and Vulnerable Groups. Strong focus on sharing common challenges and identifying common solutions. • Improvement Partners continue to have a regular focus on well-being, attendance and exclusions, regularly supported by LA PIPs for Rhondda Cynon Taf.	• LA PIPs and IPs to continue attending All School Reviews, Progress Reviews and liaising with LA leads to further support in this area.

	Reduce the number of exclusions across schools within the LA	• Regular regional meetings continue to take place involving LA Attendance, Exclusion and Well-being Leads with the CSC Lead for Well-being and Vulnerable Groups. Strong focus on sharing common challenges and identifying common solutions. • Improvement Partners continue to have a regular focus on well-being, attendance and exclusions, regularly supported by LA PIPs.	• See above
	Ensure there are robust approaches to enhancing learner wellbeing	• Regular regional meetings continue to take place involving LA Attendance, Exclusion and Well-being Leads with the CSC Lead for Well-being and Vulnerable Groups. Strong focus on sharing common challenges and identifying common solutions. • Improvement Partners continue to have a regular focus on well-being, attendance and exclusions, regularly supported by LA Principal Improvement Partners.	• See above

Strategic Priority 5:	21st Century Schools		
Aim	**Delivery Requirements**	**Evaluation of Progress of CSC activity to support LA Priorities**	**Next Steps**
Delivering 21st Century learning environments and innovative services for our learners and communities	Deliver Band B of the Council's ambitious Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme, removing surplus places, delivering net zero carbon new school buildings, improving the quality of learning environments and school buildings, increasing special school capacity, and increasing access to high quality teaching and learning opportunities for all	• This is a Local Authority area of responsibility.	
	Develop proposals for the new primary school at Glyncoch in accordance with the funding terms and conditions		
	Progress proposals for the provision of a new primary school at Llanillud.		
	Evaluate and further develop our community schools to extend early years provision, wrap around care, sporting facilities, extended and family learning, family engagement and the co-location of services on school sites right in the heart of our communities.		
	Deliver capital investment to develop, extend and improve childcare and early years provision.		
	Ensure we have sufficient specialist pupil places in our community for our children who require additional support.		
	Evaluate the impact of the school reorganisation programme on the school community and identify areas for learning and improvement		

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM RCT LGES INSPECTION

	Recommendation	Evaluation of progress of CSC actions to support recommendations	Next Steps
R1	Sharpen approaches to self-evaluation and improvement planning	For information on how CSC have supported RCT LA in this recommendation, please see strategic priority 1 and 2	
R2	Strengthen approaches to Welsh-medium education, for example by improving access and support for learners with additional learning needs and providing opportunities for late immersion for learners	For information on how CSC have supported RCT LA in this recommendation, please see strategic priority 1, 2 and 3	
R3	Work closely with schools, pupil referral units and the regional consortium to build on the local authority's work to further improve attendance and reduce exclusions	For information on how CSC have supported RCT LA in this recommendation, please see strategic priority 1, 2, 3 and 4	

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2023/2024

EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

22nd January 2024

AN UPDATE ON ESTYN'S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES

Author: Gaynor Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services

1. **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide an update on the progress made against the recommendations for improvement identified following Estyn's inspection of the education services in Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council in January 2023.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

     It is recommended that Members:

2.1 Consider the information provided.

2.2 Consider whether any further information is required on any aspect of the report or the work of the Education and Inclusion Services Directorate.

3. **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1 To provide Members with information on the progress made in addressing the recommendations resulting from Estyn's inspection of the Education Directorate in January 2023.

4. **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

4.1 Prior to the January 2023 inspection, Rhondda Cynon Taf Education Services had its last core inspection in March 2012 when Estyn judged Education to be 'adequate', with 'adequate prospects for improvement.'

4.2   In order to improve, Rhondda Cynon Taf Council was considered to require improvement in a number of key areas. Six key recommendations were made, including:

R1   Raise standards in schools particularly in key stage 4
R2   Improve attendance rates in all schools
R3   Improve the evaluation and analyses of data across service areas and partnerships to drive improvements in outcomes for learners
R4   Use the full powers available to the authority to improve leadership and management in schools
R5   Reduce surplus places
R6   Improve the rigour and the level of scrutiny and challenge across all services and partnerships.

4.3   As consequence of this inspection, the local authority was placed in a follow-up category of Estyn Monitoring. Following a series of follow-up visits from Estyn, the local authority was judged to have made sufficient progress. In August 2014, Estyn provided formal confirmation that the local authority no longer required further follow- up activity due to the progress made.

4.4   Estyn's 2023 Inspection of Education Services in Rhondda Cynon Taf was very positive and no follow-up was required. Three key recommendations for improvement were made:

R1   Sharpen approaches to self-evaluation and improvement planning
R2   Strengthen approaches to Welsh-medium education, for example by improving access and support for learners with additional learning needs and providing opportunities for late immersion for learners
R3   Work closely with schools, pupil referral units and the regional consortium to build on the local authority's work to further improve attendance and reduce exclusions.

4.5   Estyn's inspection of local authorities focuses on three inspection areas, namely:

Inspection area 1 – Outcomes
Standards and progress overall
Standards and progress of specific groups
Well-being and attitudes to learning

Inspection area 2 – Education Services
Support for school improvement
Support for vulnerable learners
Other education support services

Inspection area 3 – Leadership and management
Quality and effectiveness of leaders and managers
Self-evaluation and improvement planning

Professional learning
Safeguarding arrangements
Use of resources

4.6 Inspectors do not inspect or evaluate all education services during a core inspection and in the local authority inspection in Rhondda Cynon Taf, the following local inspection questions (LIQs) were highlighted for further exploration:

LIQ1: How effective is the challenge, support and intervention in improving the quality of teaching and leadership in schools and PRUs?
LIQ2: How effective is the local authority working with its communities to support the most vulnerable learners and what impact is this having, for example on improving attendance, well-being and engagement?
LIQ3: How well does the local authority meet the needs of pupils with ALN?
LIQ4: To what extent does the local authority consider appropriately the educational benefits and risks of its school organisation proposals?

5. <u>SUMMARY OF ESTYN'S FINDINGS</u>

5.1 The Estyn report provides a comprehensive overview of inspection findings, including the Directorate's strengths, areas for improvement and recommendations.

5.2 A concise summary of Estyn's key findings is also detailed in the published report and is extracted in full below. Areas of strength are highlighted in **bold** and areas for development are <u>underlined</u> for ease of reference:

'Leaders in Rhondda Cynon Taf education services provide clear and purposeful leadership. They are committed to ensuring that children and young people achieve their very best. The leader, chief executive, cabinet member for education, elected members and senior staff in the education directorate have set high expectations for their officers, schools and providers. All officers have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and are empowered to take action to provide valuable services to improve outcomes for children and young people across the authority.

Leaders in the local authority make their decisions carefully, based on how best to serve their different communities and to meet individual needs. For example, the council makes effective use of a wide range of data and information when considering school reorganisation and planning. This means that school organisation proposals take good account of the needs of the school's community and promote equity of provision for pupils. <u>However, improving provision for Welsh, for example through late immersion opportunities, specialist ALN provision and improving the outcomes for Welsh in English-medium schools, is at an early stage of development.</u>

Generally, inspection outcomes over time have been sound within the local authority. Since we resumed inspection in February 2022, we asked three primary schools to provide case studies of good practice, <u>one primary school requires special measures, and another primary school was placed into Estyn review.</u>

The director and her senior team work pro-actively in partnership with Central South Consortium (CSC), the school improvement service. The local authority shares explicitly its high expectations of the work of the regional consortium. For example, the local authority is clear about how CSC should support its strategic priorities and directs improvement partners to gather the first-hand evidence required by the local authority. <u>Overall, the quality of support and the information provided by the CSC is too variable.</u>

The local authority places a high priority on supporting its most vulnerable children and young people to improve their outcomes, well-being and life chances and provides helpful support for schools to improve these pupils' attendance and behaviour. <u>Over time, the attendance of pupils in Rhondda Cynon Taf has been lower than national figures and the attendance of those pupils who are eligible for free school meals has remained low.</u>

The local authority has provided particularly helpful support to its schools and settings to prepare for the additional learning needs (ALN) reforms. Staff have benefited from a broad range of professional learning to improve their understanding of how to identify individual needs. A particular strength has been the way in which staff have been supported to develop their understanding of person-centred planning and individual development plans. Overall, support for additional learning needs is strong.

Across the directorate, senior officers and their staff are committed to continuously improving the service they provide. They strive to identify and support future leaders and provide a very helpful leadership development professional learning programme.

A notable strength is the way in which this has supported succession planning and improvements in leadership across the local authority and its schools. The director and her senior team have developed a clear programme for evaluation and improvement, which supports all officers to have a suitable overview of their areas of responsibility. <u>Despite this, self-evaluation and improvement planning processes often lack precision. In particular, officers do not always identify clear indicators of success, and this hinders their ability to evaluate their work precisely and to plan for future improvements.</u>

Leaders in the directorate support staff very well. A particular strength is the way they provide officers with the autonomy to make decisions about how best to support schools and settings. Staff feel valued and well-informed of the direction and vision for improvement in the local authority. Over time, this has supported the local authority effectively to incrementally improve the services they provide.

5.3 Estyn identified two areas of innovative and effective practice and the local authority was requested to write two case studies. These included
- Use of data across the local authority to inform planning, decision making and support for schools
- The development of future leaders in education through a strong professional learning offer and effective succession planning.

The impact of the work in these two areas of provision and standards was considered to be very effective. Both case studies can be found in Appendix 1 and 2 of the Estyn report.

5.4 The published report provides a comprehensive review of all findings, with multiple references to areas of strength and considerably fewer references to areas for improvement. Areas identified by Estyn for improvement had in the main been identified through prior self-evaluation and have continued to form an important part of our improvement plans during 2023/24.

6. **PROGRESS AGAINST ESTYN'S RECOMMENDATIONS**

6.1 **Recommendation 1**: Improvement work to refine and further improve self-evaluation processes has been ongoing and processes are now more streamlined and simplified. The Directorate's Delivery Plan is now better informed by performance measures and success criteria and greater focus has been placed on aligning the service plans that sit below the Directorate's Delivery Plan. In summary,

- there is close alignment between the Council's Corporate Plan, Education's Strategy Plan for 2022-25 and Directorate Delivery Plans.

- the Directorate Strategic Plan for 2022-25 provides a framework for all delivery planning and for ensures that we meet our well established vision, missions and over-arching strategic priorities. These include:

  o Strategic Priority 1: Developing a highly skilled educational workforce and excellent leadership at all levels which is essential is we are to create good schools.

  o Strategic Priority 2: Supporting educational settings to deliver a transformational curriculum, high quality teaching and learning and improved outcomes for all.

  o Strategic Priority 3: Ensuring equity and support for vulnerable learners and their families.

- o Strategic Priority 4: Enhancing the well-being of our learners and the workforce.

  - o Strategic Priority 5: Delivering 21st Century learning environments and innovative services for our learners and communities.

- Service Self Evaluation (SSE) processes have been strengthened and are well informed by qualitative and quantitative data, and extensive stakeholder feedback. Each service area has a data dashboard that provides extensive data for the purpose of service self-evaluation.

- Framework for SSE has been updated and the self-evaluation process and report has been considerably streamlined. The SSE report is now more condensed and more evaluative in nature.

- Self-evaluation in Education is cyclical and is the focus of ongoing discussions. This includes SMT meetings, workshops involving all staff, stakeholder feedback via surveys, and more planned evaluation. Focused monitoring, evaluation and review (MER) activities have been strengthened and includes: a frequent analysis of Estyn outcomes; school improvement processes and outcomes; data analysis; quarterly monitoring and review of delivery plans; and a review of Cabinet, Scrutiny and Audit Committee reports.

- Stakeholder feedback has been strengthened and an engagement plan developed. This now needs to be fully integrated into the MER cycle and a calendar of activities developed.

- Service Delivery Plan templates now adopt the same format as the Directorate Delivery Plan to ensure consistency. All plans require use of performance indictors and success criteria. Service Plans are now quality assured and approved by the Director of Education and Service Director for 21st Century Schools and Transformation.

- Quarterly review meetings now take place to monitor and challenge delivery plan progress and to collate supporting evidence as the year progresses.

- The Wellbeing Plan is now integrated into the Directorate Delivery Plan to avoid duplication and to ensure routine monitoring and evaluation.

- There is a culture of high support and challenge. Heads of Service and Service Director individually present to the wider SMT on their service's performance, identified areas of strength and priorities for improvement.

- Staff and managers are clear about their roles and responsibilities and are well supported to ensure that they have the required expertise, knowledge and skills to be effective in their roles. Good access to training and development opportunities are provided to help the workforce to improve. Performance Management is effective. The Annual Individual Performance Review contributes to a strong performance culture within the Directorate and high accountability and is successful in identifying development needs and supporting succession planning. Staff are held accountable for their performance and supported in challenging areas

through regular one to one and team meetings where progress against delivery plans is monitored.

6.2 **Recommendation 2:** Strengthen approaches to Welsh-medium education, for example by improving access and support for learners with additional learning needs and providing opportunities for late immersion for learners

Delivery planning and partnership approaches to the **Welsh in Education Strategic Plan** (WESP) are robust, with a member of the senior management team in Education leading on each of the seven strategic outcomes. Good feedback has been provided by Welsh Government on the WESP, and the approach adopted to data gathering for outcome 7 has been deemed as good practice and will be shared more widely with others.

Sustainable Communities for Learning investments have resulted in enhanced capacity in the Welsh medium sector. Works have been completed on the school site of YGG Aberdar to deliver a new sessional childcare facility providing an additional 30 registered places, and an extension to provide additional facilities and an additional 72 learner places at the school. Works have also been completed for YG Rhydywaun to deliver an extension to increase capacity at the school. The brand new block on the school site opened to learners from September 2022 and created an additional 187 learner places at the school. In the Rhondda Fach area, capital funding has been secured to provide a brand new school for YGG Llyn y Forwyn. Work is progressing on the new school site to provide additional capacity, childcare facilities, and community use facilities to encourage the use of the language in the community. In the Taff Ely area of the County, the construction of the new Welsh medium school in Rhydyfelin has progressed successfully. The new school will be named Ysgol Awel Taf and is on target to open to learners from September 2024 as planned. In addition to this development, a new Ti and Fi provision has been established in the recently constructed school, with 7 new starters and 5 children have registered for a nursery place in the new Welsh medium school

There are some exciting developments underway to extend Welsh medium learning support class provision for learners with **ALN**. The Access and Inclusion team has been working closely with Ysgol Garth Olwg to facilitate the opening of a new Welsh medium Learning Support Class (LSC) provision for Key Stage 3 and 4 learners at the school. Provision was due to open to learners from September 2022. However, due to recruitment difficulties it was not possible to open the provision prior to September 2023.

Proposals for the establishment of Welsh medium ALN provision in the new Welsh medium primary school in Rhydyfelin were previously listed as Year 2 to 3 actions in the 10 year WESP (2022-2032). However, to ensure swifter progression, the proposals were brought forward. The proposals were presented to Cabinet for approval in May 2023 and consultation was duly undertaken and completed. In December 2023, Cabinet agreed to a proposal to establish two Welsh medium primary phase LSCs at the new Welsh medium primary school in Rhydyfelin, YGG Awel Taf, for pupils with significant ALN

taking effect from September 2024. This will significantly enhance Welsh medium specialist ALN placement provision in RCT.

The Access and Inclusion team has been working with CSC to ensure effective ALN provision is available for learners in mainstream education and special schools and classes in RCT. Improvements have been made to the self-evaluation processes to ensure information regarding ALN forms part of each schools' monitoring, evaluation and review cycle. A new process has been agreed to implement a joint professional development opportunity and quality assurance process to ensure a shared understanding between Access and Inclusion services, CSC Improvement Partners, Headteachers, ALN Co-Ordinators and Governors regarding effective self-evaluation of ALN. This will include:

•   Guidance for mainstream schools on effective self-evaluation of ALN.
•   Training on effective self-evaluation for CSC Improvement Partners, Headteachers, ALNCos and Governors.
•   Support and oversight by CSC Improvement Partners as part of their quality assurance processes – ongoing throughout academic year.
•   Designated joint Access and Inclusion Services and CSC meetings to discuss good practice and concerns to inform support for individual schools.

A **Welsh language immersion team**, or the 'Taith Iaith' team, is now established and is proving to be very successful. There are currently, three members of staff, one teacher and two learning support assistants, delivering a peripatetic model of Welsh immersion support throughout the County Borough. The team offers one hour of face-to-face support, daily, to pupils in their Welsh medium school. Currently they provide support to pupils in years 2-6 and in year 1 when capacity allows. The Taith Iaith lead has held face to face meetings with all Welsh medium primary headteachers in RCT and distributed information booklets explaining the Taith Iaith process, eligibility criteria and referral system. There are currently 11 learners in 7 Welsh medium schools accessing the scheme. All learners wishing to transfer from English to Welsh medium schools in years 2-6 are eligible for support from the Taith Iaith team.

Learners are enabled to develop their Welsh language skills in a variety of ways, but learning through play and having fun are key to achieving effective teaching and progression. Progress is measured using a range of summative and formative assessments. Summative assessments includes learners completing an oracy baseline assessment at the start, mid-way and at the end of the programme. This ensures that progress is closely monitored and further developed. Once learners achieve a success rate of 80%, and both teachers and parents are in agreement, the daily support ceases. Formative assessments include self-evaluation activities, video recordings and oral feedback. Video recordings are a powerful tool for capturing the progress made by learners speaking the Welsh language.

Aspects of the scheme that have been particularly appreciated, include parental

communication through the Seesaw application, local fieldtrips and group work. In order to further develop the scheme, plans are afoot to further develop the reading scheme, literacy games and to visit further immersion centres across Wales.

6.3   **Recommendation 3:**   Work closely with schools, pupil referral units and the regional consortium to build on the local authority's work to further improve attendance and reduce exclusions.

The Annual School Exclusion Performance Report for 2022-23 and School Attendance Data 2022-23 were the focus of scrutiny by the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee in December 2023. Both reports provide a detailed overview of the Council's performance in relation to attendance and exclusion data over the last academic year.

6.4   The report on **attendance** data in December 2023 detailed the overall school attendance rates broken down by phase for the last four academic years. These figures are for statutory school age only across mainstream and special schools (pupil referral units are not included). Primary data is for the full academic year and secondary data is shown up to the end of Summer 1 in line with Welsh Government data collection dates even though these did not take place in all of these years during the pandemic.

Rhondda Cynon Taf Primary Phase Attendance								
Academic Year	All Pupils	Non FSM	FSM	EAL	SEN	Persistent Absence	Gypsy, Roma and/or Traveller	Service Family
2019/20	93.0%	94.0%	90.1%	92.2%	90.1%	5.4%	86.8%	93.7%
2020/21	91.1%	93.1%	86.4%	92.1%	87.6%	11.7%	61.8%	93.3%
2021/22	89.8%	91.2%	85.4%	91.1%	85.6%	10.8%	69.0%	92.0%
2022/23	91.0%	92.3%	86.8%	91.2%	86.6%	9.3%	75.7%	92.8%

Rhondda Cynon Taf Secondary Phase Attendance								
Academic Year	All Pupils	Non FSM	FSM	EAL	SEN	Persistent Absence	Gypsy, Roma and/or Traveller	Service Family

2019/20	**92.1%**	**93.4%**	**88.0%**	**95.1%**	**88.0%**	**7.9%**	**75.2%**	**95.3%**
2020/21	**85.5%**	**88.6%**	**76.7%**	**91.7%**	**81.8%**	**23.2%**	**53.3%**	**89.9%**
2021/22	**85.2%**	**87.6%**	**76.8%**	**91.5%**	**81.4%**	**22.3%**	**69.9%**	**88.1%**
2022/23	**85.8%**	**88.3%**	**77.0%**	**91.7%**	**82.4%**	**21.0%**	**67.1%**	**88.2%**

All data presented above is reflective of PLASC data taken during January of the academic year. Persistent Absence is the % of all learners who have below 80% attendance. SEN attendance does not currently include ALN.

The data highlights the significant impact the Covid-19 pandemic had on attendance levels across RCT with a drop in primary attendance of 3.2 percentage points at primary phase between 2019/20 and 2021/22 and a 6.9 percentage point drop at secondary phase across the same timeframe. We have however seen encouraging signs at primary schools last year, with a 1.2 percentage point increase between 2021/22 and 2022/23 although still down 2 percentage points when compared to 2019/20; secondary schools with a 0.6 percentage point increase between 2021/22 and 2022/23 although still significantly below 2019/20 levels.

However, the data in the first table must be taken into a wider context around attendance coding at this time. As a result of the pandemic, for the academic years 2020/21 and 2021/22 there were additional temporary attendance codes introduced by Welsh Government. These were for confirmed Covid cases and for those isolating/accessing remote learning. The confirmed case code was statistically an authorised absence and mapped back to illness coding. However, the code for isolation/remote learning was statistically a 'not required to attend' mark and therefore does not appear in attendance data collection figures presented above. Similarly, the existing Y code usually reserved for partial or full closures of schools was also utilised during these years when cohorts were forced to isolate and again, these are also 'not required to attend' marks and do not appear in attendance data percentages as a result. Physical absence for these academic years is therefore higher than percentage figures alone would suggest, which again provides some reassurance in the rising attendance marks in 2022/23 which is from a lower benchmark than the percentage figures alone may show.

From the data presented above, it is evident that improvements have been made across all but one group of learners in 2022/23 compared to the previous academic year. However, there remains considerable challenge particularly at secondary phase and for eligible Free School Meal learners. Secondary phase attendance was 1.7% below the Welsh average of 87.5% in 2022/23 (gap was 1.0% in 2018/19), 21st position across Wales and therefore is a central focus for continued improvement.

The Attendance and Wellbeing Service continues to be proactive in supporting schools to improve their rates of attendance.

During the academic year 2022/23 the Council's Attendance and Wellbeing Service performance includes the following:

- 978 Education Appraisals for families in receipt of support from the Resilient Families Service (942 in 2021/22).
- 773 new open case referrals received (841 in 2021/22).
- 7,135 Wellbeing Response Visits undertaken (6,802 in 2021/22) for 3,826 learners. 3,690 visits (51.7%) resulted in improved attendance when comparing the 40 days prior to visit, and 40 days afterwards.
- Prosecuted 30 parents for non-attendance of their children following open case work (28 in 2021/22).
- 18 schools received additional support for attendance via Progress Meetings, Team Around the School or single-agency response. 11 of the 18 (61.1%) have improved their attendance when comparing Autumn Term 1.
- Convening an attendance event for Headteachers and Attendance Leads was in Hawthorn Leisure Centre in July 2023 with over 80 school representatives.
- Continued support for Family Engagement Officers (FEOs). Additional support has also been provided to schools since early 2020 in the form of FEOs with funding provided via RCT Cabinet, and more recently through Welsh Government, with match-funding in 29 schools.
- Additional funding was received from Welsh Government for the 2022/23 financial year for Education Welfare Services. RCT has utilised this funding to employ three additional temporary Attendance and Wellbeing Officers, a Targeted Support Officer, and Educational Psychology support for the service for the most difficult and entrenched cases and/or those with Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA). This will be coupled with a pilot this academic year for multi-agency EBSA forums in secondary schools to discuss learners facing these difficulties and the support that can offered by schools and partners

6.5   The Council's performance in relation to **exclusion** continues to be a source of concern and the report presented to Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee in December 2023 provided a detailed analysis of our performance over 2022-23. The table below shows the number of permanent and fixed term exclusions and the number of days lost for the academic years 2021/22 and 2022/23.

Summary of Exclusions within RCT in 2021/22 – 2022/23

	2021/22	2022/23	Percentage difference between 2021/22 & 2022/23
Permanent Exclusions	18	31	72.22%
Reinstated from Permanent Exclusion	3	9	200.00%
Number of Fixed Term Exclusions	2436	2927	20.16%
Number of Days Lost	4446.5	5516	24.05%
Average length of exclusion (days)	1.83	1.88	3.24%

Breakdown of Exclusion Data According to Setting for 2022/23

	Primary Phase	Secondary Phase	PRU/Special School	Total
Permanent Exclusions	0	30	1	31
Number of Fixed Term Exclusions	369	2418	140	2927
Number of Days Lost	490	4775	251	5516

The above data demonstrates a significant increase in the number of permanent exclusions, fixed term exclusions and the number of days lost within RCT schools when comparing academic years 2021/22 and 2022/23.

6.6 The graphs below highlight the fluctuating trends evident within RCT for both permanent and fixed term exclusions over the past 5 academic years. However, these must he interpreted with considerable caution due to the impact of the pandemic years on access to school-based education.

Exclusions within RCT over 5 years

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Permanent exclusions	23	20	9	18	31
Number of exclusions	2686	1490	1432	2439	2927
Number of days lost	5365.5	2695	2537.5	4446.5	5516

The number of pupils subject to an exclusion has also fluctuated over the past five academic years with a dip during the Covid period. However, it is concerning that the number of pupils incurring a fixed term exclusion in 2022/23 exceeded the number excluded in 2018/19 prior to the pandemic:

Summary of Exclusions within RCT in Autumn Term (1st half-term)

An analysis of trends over the last 5 years Autumn term data (1st half-term) shows escalating trend data, although it should be noted that data over the pandemic years are likely to be unrepresentative due to school closures and high isolation rates during this period.

Autumn Term 1	Number of Exclusions
2020/21	455
2021/22	316
2022/23	542
2023/24	588

Access and Inclusion Services continue to implement a range of wellbeing and behaviour initiatives with the support of Welsh Government grant funding. These include

- Using grant funding to roll out training to schools by Nurture UK on diagnostic assessment of behaviour through Boxall Profiling and the implementation of nurture approaches in schools at both an accredited and non-accredited level.
- Utilising more consistent tools to assess children's wellbeing. The Boxall profile is an evidence-based assessment tool which is used to assess the social, emotional and mental development of pupils aged 4-18. By using a consistent tool across the authority, a common language for use across all schools and the Behaviour Support Service has been utilised and feedback suggests that staff felt more confident in administering the assessment, analysing outcomes and planning interventions for pupils.
- The offer to all secondary and through schools to participate in a two-year accredited National Nurturing Schools Programme together with those primary schools that host a Learning Support Class for Nurture or Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD). To date, one primary school has successfully completed accreditation, reporting positive impact of the nurturing approach upon the whole-school approach to behaviour and wellbeing. In addition, six secondary schools, two through schools and two primary schools are on course to gain accreditation this academic year, with an additional secondary school awaiting the outcome of their formal assessment.
- 26 school-based delegates accessed non-accredited Theory and Practice of Nurture Groups training which has resulted in nine participants setting up a nurture group for pupils in their schools and a further eight implementing nurture approaches within the wider school provision.
- As part of the Education Directorate's Wellbeing strategy to support the implementation of the Welsh Government's statutory guidance *'Framework on embedding a whole-school approach to emotional and mental health wellbeing',* a range of projects and training opportunities to address issues such as healthy relationships through theatre workshops and R-Time group work continue to be funded via the Whole School Approach Funding together with further training for school staff on Trauma Informed Approaches so that they develop a deeper understanding of pupil behaviour and the implementation of supportive, non-punitive approaches as alternatives to exclusion.

Schools are also supported
- By making referrals to wide ranging specialist support services (Behaviour Support and Educational Psychology Services) for intervention at individual, group or whole school level.
- With access to training from central services, including bespoke training.
- By accessing STEP 4 financial support to establish in-house provision for learners with significant social, emotional and behavioural needs. Based on the evaluation of Tranches 1-3 of the Step 4 Programme and following proposals received from schools in Summer Term 2023 additional funding of approximately £900k has been agreed to establish a further 8 school-based Step 4 SEBD provisions in secondary/through schools in Tranche 4 of the Step 4 programme between September 2023 and August 2025 to strengthen the continuum of SEBD provision in RCT. The Step 4 programme provides enhanced funding to mainstream schools to develop

their own school-based wellbeing and behaviour provisions to provide effective support and intervention for pupils with significant wellbeing needs and SEBD within their local school communities and without the need to access LA specialist provision. Overall, feedback from schools demonstrates positive outcomes for pupils accessing Step 4 provisions in relation to improved attendance, reduced exclusions and academic attainment.

- For a minority of schools, the Team Around the School (TAS) Protocol, a more collaborative framework for addressing school improvement concerns involving schools, Central South Consortium Improvement Partners and LA Inclusion Officers, was established last academic year with the aim of providing support and challenge to schools where significant concerns had been identified in relation to behaviour management and exclusions. Despite encouraging early indications of improved exclusion data for some schools engaged in the TAS process, overall impact of this approach to date is limited and will need further consideration. There is, however, an escalation process built in to the TAS Protocol where there has been limited progress made by schools in reducing their exclusions and addressing behavioural concerns over time. From Spring Term 2024, schools will be asked to set improvement targets to reduce exclusions in their settings.

- For schools causing concern and accessing enhanced support, progress in addressing any concerns in relation to exclusions are more formally monitored through progress meetings involving senior officers and CSC colleagues. Where there is significant concern, pre-warning notices are issued and more formal monitoring takes place, involving the Director of Education, the Cabinet Member for Education, Headteacher, Chair of Governors, Head of Achievement and Principal Improvement Partner.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not currently required - the content of the report is for information purposes only.

8. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The report highlights specific recommendations relating to the development of Welsh language provision and these will be addressed as part of ongoing improvement planning and delivery.

9. CONSULTATION

9.1 There is no requirement to undertake any consultation

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

10.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report.

11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

11.1 The inspection of local government education services (LGES) is carried out under Section 38 of the Education Act 1997 which specified that His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales (HMCI) 'may, and, if requested to do so by the Secretary of State, shall, arrange for any local authority to be inspected'. Such an inspection 'shall consist of a review of the way in which the authority are performing any function which relates to the provision of education for (a) persons of compulsory school age (whether at school or otherwise) or (b) for persons of any age above or below that age who are registered as pupils at schools maintained by the authority.'

11.2 Other aspects of local authority provision are subject to inspection under a range of legislation, including the functions conferred on them under sections 25 and 26 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000 relating to education, training or youth support services (within the meaning of section 123 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000).

11.3 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and Local Government (Wales) Act 2015 support the approach and arrangements for the inspection of local authorities either by individual inspectorates or jointly between Estyn, Audit Wales and Care Inspectorate Wales.

11.4 There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

12. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN/OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/SIP

12.1 This is an information report presenting an overview of Estyn's inspection of the local authority's education services and the progress made in addressing the recommendations. There are clear links associated to the Corporate Plan 2020-24 and the Education Strategic Plan for 2022-25 which places a clear emphasis on improving schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf and realising our Mission of Achieving Equity and Excellence in Education and Enhanced Wellbeing for All.

13. STRATEGIC OR RELEVANT TO ELECTORAL WARDS

13.1 This report relates to all electoral wards.

14. CONCLUSION

14.1 The report aims to provide an overview of Estyn's inspection of Education Services in Rhondda Cynon Taf, its strengths and areas for improvement. An overview is provided of the progress made to date in addressing the key recommendations.

14.2 The Directorate has ensured that Estyn's recommendations for improvement have been a priority for further development in our annual delivery plans and a strong focus for our ongoing self-evaluation and improvement planning processes, and service delivery. Progress is being made in addressing all three recommendations. However, exclusion rates are a source of ongoing concern

and targeted intervention continues in this post pandemic phase. Improving rates of attendance and exclusion is a challenge both locally and nationally, and this will remain an important focus for 2024 and beyond.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

22nd JANUARY 2024

AN UPDATE ON ESTYN'S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES

Author: Gaynor Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion

Background Papers

Inspection report Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council 2023 (gov.wales)

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RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2023-24

EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

22nd JANUARY 2024

WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES

Author: Lisa Howell, 21st Century School Organisation and Business Manager

1. **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To provide an update on the implementation and the progress of the Council's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) 2022–2032.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Members:

2.1 Note the progress made since the previous update.

2.2 Consider the actions contained within the appended Annual Work Plan and note the subsequent feedback received from Welsh Government.

3. **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1 The WESP is a key priority for the Council and is the strategy for increasing and improving the planning of the provision of Welsh medium education in RCT to enable all learners in our communities to develop their Welsh language skills and assist with Welsh Government vision of 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050.

3.2 The WESP underpins the Council's approach to achieving the ambitious target set to increase the percentage of year one learners in Welsh medium education by 10% over a 10 year period.

4.   **BACKGROUND**

4.1   Section 84 of The School Standards and Organisation(Wales) Act 2013 requires a local authority to prepare a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan and outlines that a plan must contain:

A: A local authority proposals on how it will carry out its education functions;
- Improve the planning of the provision of education through the medium of Welsh in its area; and,
- Improve the standards of Welsh medium education and of the teaching of Welsh in its area.

B: The local authority targets for improving the planning of the provision of Welsh Medium education in its area and reports on the progress made to meet the targets contained in the previous Plan or previous revised Plan.

4.2   Following Cabinet permission to consult on the WESP, the Council welcomed the opportunity to engage and participate with a wide range of stakeholders during the statutory consultation process. Following its conclusion, on 13th December 2021, Cabinet approved the draft WESP prior to it being submitted to Welsh Government for final approval in January 2022. The WESP became a formal and adopted strategic document in September 2022.

4.3   In order to meet the ambitious overarching target of the WESP by 2032, the Council, along with external partnership organisations who collectively form the WESP Steering Group, continue to work collaboratively to ensure success.

4.4   The WESP Steering Group is chaired by the Director of Education with each member of the Senior Management Team in the Education Directorate having responsibility for leading the work on each of the seven outcomes associated with the WESP. This is achieved through the work of the seven WESP Sub-Groups, which has included the co-construction of the action plan and moving forward, its effective delivery and review. The WESP Sub-Groups have been established to provide an effective focus for the Directorate, in partnership with external groups and organisations, to deliver on the 10 year plan with the aim of achieving the overarching goal of significantly increasing the number of learners in Welsh medium education by 2032.

4.5   There has been good engagement from our partners in the WESP Steering Group and the seven WESP Sub-Groups. This has included participation from a range of Directorates across the Council, external organisations, early years provisions, English and Welsh medium schools, and further education providers.

4.6   Outcomes from each of the seven WESP Sub-Groups contributed to the annual Work Plan as well as a draft five-year Work Plan. The draft five-year Work Plan was submitted to Welsh Government on 17th December 2022 and positive feedback was received.

4.7 A process for monitoring progress against the Work Plan has been established to ensure that we remain on target. The Annual Work Plan is intended to be a practical working document to ensure effective delivery of the WESP in the shorter term.

4.8 The Council is required to review the WESP each year and submit to Welsh Government an Annual Review Report capturing the key achievements for that year. A copy of the Annual Review Report is included in Appendix 1. An Annual Review Report will be provided to Members annually.

5. UPDATE / CURRENT POSITION

5.1 The Council's Annual Review Report for year one of the WESP was submitted to Welsh Government for consideration on 31st July 2023.

5.2 Feedback from Welsh Government on the report was received on 14th November 2023. The feedback received was largely positive, a full copy of the response is contained within Appendix 2.

5.3 There has been further notable progress made in a number of areas since the report was prepared and submitted to Welsh Government in July 2023, and these are listed below.

Outcome 1

5.4 Following submission of two capital funding bids to Welsh Government for development proposals to increase Welsh medium childcare provision for Penderyn and YGG Castellau, a sum of £840k has been approved by Welsh Government for Penderyn. The funding decision from Welsh Government for YGG Castellau is still awaited.

As part of the Flying Start expansion, of the total number of 563 Flying Start places offered since April 2023, 90 (18%) have opted for Welsh medium Flying Start provision. This is a notable increase and a positive step forward to increasing the numbers accessing provision.

Outcome 2

5.5 The Council's Welsh Language Immersion Service 'Taith Iaith' officially welcomed learners from September 2023. At the end of term (December 2023), a total of 11 learners across seven different schools were accessing support. The immersion team were at full capacity at the end of the Autumn term, however as some learners were expected to finish the bespoke programme by Christmas, new spaces are now available. The immersion teacher has been gathering feedback from those parents accessing the service, as well as from staff at the relevant schools. Feedback received has been incredibly positive, which has been echoed by some of the teachers who attend the WESP Steering Group during recent meetings.

Outcome 3

5.6   On the whole, the transition rates between Welsh medium primary and Welsh medium secondary education across the County Borough are positive, however there are certain areas where higher numbers are transitioning to the nearest English medium secondary school. The Head of Service Transformation and Data Systems has met, or is due to meet, with each separate school cluster to discuss the data in further detail with the respective schools.

Outcome 4

5.7   Contact has been made with the Hen Felin Training Centre who deliver childcare qualifications in the Rhondda area, to gather further information on the courses they offer at the centre. Although they don't offer courses through the medium of Welsh, they do have a Welsh speaking assessor who can liaise and support students. The assessors actively support Welsh speaking students onto placements in Welsh medium settings with the hope of retaining work in this field. This is a positive step to addressing some of the concerns relating to difficulties recruiting Welsh medium childcare practitioners.

Outcome 5

5.8   All schools in RCT continue to work towards achieving the bronze, silver or gold Siarter Iaith Cymraeg Campus award, which is awarded to schools for increasing the use of Welsh outside of the classroom, in line with the relevant criteria. CSCJES lead on this programme. A total of 5 Welsh medium primary schools and 2 English medium primary schools have achieved the gold award and completed the programme. All other schools continue to work towards achieving their respective awards. There are 2 English medium secondary schools yet to engage with provision, CSCJES are targeting these schools to encourage uptake with provision.

Within the Annual Review Report, there's information relating to the first fully Welsh leisure club in RCT which was established during the summer. At the time of submitting the Annual Review Report, the club had submitted an application for funding and has since received confirmation that they have been successful in securing just over £2,000 of funding from the Sport Wales Be Active grant. Work around this continues and further updates will follow in due course.

Outcome 6

5.9   The new Welsh medium LSC provision for Key Stage 3 & 4 learners with ALN at Ysgol Garth Olwg opened to learners from September 2023.

The Council have recently consulted on the establishment of two new Welsh medium primary phase LSCs in the new Welsh medium school YGG Awel Taf which will open to learners from September 2024.

Marketing

5.10   In October 2023, a social media marketing campaign was launched across the Council's corporate social media platforms (Facebook and Twitter). The campaign specifically targeted promoting Welsh medium education with the use of videos shared by Welsh Government and Mudiad Meithrin. The campaign ran for 10 weeks, the statistics of the campaign will now be evaluated to inform future campaigns.

An Eisteddfod Schools Working Party has been established. Working alongside officers from the Eisteddfod team, the working group will serve as an opportunity for schools to engage directly with the Eisteddfod through sharing good practice and collaborating on activities to fundraise and raise awareness of the Eisteddfod ahead of its arrival in August 2024.

In December 2023, with the support of Ysgol Llanhari, a funding application was submitted to Cronfa Glyndwr to secure funding towards the creation of a Welsh medium education promotional video. We were successful in securing the funding, the Council's WESP Officer will now work with Ysgol Llanhari, WESP partners and internal officers to plan and produce a video specific to RCT.

6.   EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS/SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

6.1   An Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment (with Social-Economic Duty) for the WESP has been completed and presented to both the Review Panel and Cabinet, this document has been reviewed and remains valid.

6.2   In summary, the Equality and Socio-Economic Impact Assessment identifies both positive and neutral impacts, and no negative impacts upon protected characteristics.

7.   WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

7.1   A Welsh Language Impact Assessment for the proposed WESP has been developed and previously presented to both the Review Panel and Cabinet, this document has been reviewed and remains valid.

7.2   Recognising the importance of 'Cymraeg 2050', and how essential the education system is to achieving its vision, the WESP sets out the Council's ten-year plan for increasing and improving the planning of provision for Welsh medium and Welsh language education. It builds on the work of the previous WESP for the period between 2017 to 2022 and sets out a plan demonstrating how the Council intends to achieve its ten-year vision.

8.   CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

8.1   A comprehensive public statutory consultation was undertaken between Monday 13th September 2021 to Monday 8th November 2021. The feedback provided via this consultation has been incorporated into the approved WESP for 2022-32.

9.   FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1   There are no financial implications aligned to this report.

10.   LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

10.1   The following legislation/regulations are aligned to this report:

1)   Section 84 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013.
2)   The WESP (Wales) Regulations 2019.
3)   The WESP (Wales) (Amendment) (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020.

11.   LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES / WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

11.1   The WESP links to the Council's Corporate Plan for the period between 2020 to 2024, specifically the priority:
- Prosperity – Creating the opportunity for people and businesses to be innovative, entrepreneurial and fulfil their potential and prosper:
  - Ensuring we have good schools, so all children have access to a great education.

11.2   The delivery of the WESP will contribute to all seven wellbeing goals listed within the Future Generation (Wales) Act. In addition, due regard has been made to the Five Ways of Working, as contained within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

12.   CONCLUSION

12.1   In order to meet the target by 2032, the Council, along with external partners and representatives who form the WESP Steering Group and WESP Sub-Groups, must work collectively to achieve this ambitious goal. The WESP Sub-Groups will continue to work collaboratively to implement the actions identified within the Work Plan with the aim of successfully achieving the key targets.

12.2   The Council remains committed to ensuring the availability of Welsh medium education and will continue to support and encourage transition from the initial early years through to primary and secondary education before progressing through to higher and further education, so that all learners whatever their learning needs are able to access Welsh medium provision. This is in line with Welsh Government's vision to create one million Welsh speakers in Wales by 2050 as set out in 'Cymraeg 2050'

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EDUCATION & INCLUSION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

22 JANUARY 2024

WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES

Author: Lisa Howell, 21st Century School Organisation and Business Manager

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ANNUAL REVIEW REPORT WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN

2022-2023

Name of Local Authority
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough

Author:	Hannah Bebb, Graduate Officer, in Partnership with Senior Officers within the Education Directorate
Approver:	Gaynor Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services
Date	31.7.23

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KEY ACHIEVEMENTS / HIGHLIGHTS

Flying Start Expansion

Since the introduction of the new 'Flying Start Approved Provider List' model, Flying Start colleagues have been working with Mudiad Meithrin to increase the number of Welsh medium providers on this list. Since the beginning of this academic year, 7 additional providers have joined the 'Approved Provider' list. A total of 125 Welsh medium Flying Start childcare places were taken this year, 56 of these places were taken up following the roll out of the expansion areas.

Development of Welsh medium education throughout the County Borough

Works have been completed on the school site of YGG Aberdar in the Cynon area to deliver a new sessional childcare facility providing an additional 30 registered places, and an extension to provide additional facilities and an additional 72 learner places at the school. Works have also been completed for YG Rhydywaun in the Cynon area to deliver an extension to increase capacity at the school. The brand new block on the school site opened to learners from September 2022 and created an additional 187 learner places at the school. In the Rhondda Fach area, capital funding has been secured to provide a brand new school for YGG Llyn y Forwyn. Work is progressing on the new school site to provide additional capacity, childcare facilities, and community use facilities to encourage the use of the language in the community. In the Taff Ely area of the county, the construction of the new Welsh medium school in Rhydyfelin has progressed successfully. The new school will be named Ysgol Awel Taf and is on target to open to learners from September 2024 as planned.

Welsh Language Immersion

In the spring term, the Local Authority successfully recruited a specialist teacher plus 2 learning support assistants to deliver Welsh language immersion to learners who are latecomers to Welsh medium education. The immersion teacher prepared a delivery plan for the roll out of the provision and successfully received funding to purchase resources. The team started to work with 3 learners from 3 separate schools from June 2023, this support will recommence from September when returning back to school for the next academic year. Two further learners have been recruited to commence support from September 2023.

Siarter Iaith Cymraeg Campus programme

CSCJES have been working closely with all schools in RCT to support them in achieving bronze, silver, and gold awards. There are now 5 Welsh medium primary schools who've received the gold award and 1 Welsh medium secondary school has received the silver award. There are 40 English medium primary schools who've received the bronze award with 10 going on to receive the silver and 2 have received the gold award. A total of 5 English medium secondary schools have received the bronze award and 3 English medium special schools/units have received the bronze award.

Increasing Additional Learning Needs (ALN) provision

Following difficulties with recruiting specialist staff, we have now successfully recruited staff for the new Welsh medium LSC provision for Key Stage 3 and 4 learners at Ysgol Garth Olwg. The provision will open to learners from September 2023. Actions undertaken to review the

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sufficiency of Welsh medium ALN provision in RCT have highlighted identified areas of need for development. As a result, the proposals for the establishment of Welsh medium ALN provision in the new Welsh medium primary school in Rhydyfelin have been brought forward. Consultation is currently underway and if successful, 2 new Welsh medium primary phase LSCs will be established at the new school.

OVERALL PLAN SUMMARY

The overarching target of our WESP is to increase the percentage of year one learners being taught through the medium of Welsh in RCT by 10% over the duration of the plan to increase the percentage to 30%. The data in the table below is derived from PLASC and demonstrates the number of year one learners attending Welsh medium primary schools over the previous five academic years, up to and including 2022-2023. The data demonstrates that the number of year one learners attending Welsh medium primary schools this year has decreased by 3 learners which is not a cause for concern at present. The impact of the interventions we are and will be delivering will take time to embed, so this will continue to be monitored closely each year as we move through the ten year plan.

Table A

Total Number of Year One Learners Attending Welsh Medium Primary Schools Over the Previous Five Academic Years					
Year Group	**Academic Year**				
	2018-2019	**2019-2020**	**2020-2021**	**2021-2022**	**2022-2023**
Year One	537	506	544	524	521

In order to reach our goal of increasing the percentage of learners by 10% by the year 2032, our targets for the next ten years are set out below. Please note, these are our projected target figures based off the overarching target of increasing the number of year one learners from 524 to 795, so the increase may not always follow a linear trend as depicted in the table below.

Table B

Target Number and % of Year One Learners Receiving Their Education Through the Medium of Welsh									
2022 - 2023		**2023 - 2024**		**2024 - 2025**		**2025 - 2026**		**2026 - 2027**	
524	**20%**	556	21%	583	22%	609	23%	636	24%
2027 - 2028		**2028 - 2029**		**2029 - 2030**		**2030 - 2031**		**2031 - 2031**	
662	25%	689	26%	715	27%	742	28%	795	30%

When comparing the actual data with the projected data, although the actual number is slightly less than the projected number, as this is such a small difference it has not been assessed as a red rating. As we have not had an increase in the number if would not be appropriate to rate our progress as green, therefore we have determined that the rating of progress against our overarching target is at amber for the first year of the plan.

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The first year of the WESP has provided the foundations for building constructive working relationships amongst internal and external officers, partners, groups, and organisations who contribute towards the WESP. We have made a good start to working towards achieving the targets set out in the WESP and we are progressing well across all outcomes. An increase in opportunities to communicate in Welsh in both Welsh and English medium schools has been seen during this year and we have proactively marketed the benefits of being bilingual and Welsh medium education through distribution of the Local Authority's Being Bilingual booklets and through making amendments to the authority's corporate website. We have facilitated continued investment in Welsh medium provision to deliver significant investment to improve and provide moder educational facilities for Welsh medium schools in RCT and we continue to do so as we move forward with the WESP.

A self-assessment has been conducted to rate our progress against each outcome of the WESP. Some outcomes have had more successes than others as can be seen in the detailed report that follows. When taking a balanced view of the WESP, although some outcomes could achieve a green rating, on the whole we would give ourselves an orange rating after the first year of delivery.

FOREWARD LOOK MILESTONES

Implement a marketing campaign:

During this first year, we have liaised with colleagues from the Local Authority's Marketing team to identify the key officers with responsibility for different elements of marketing. A communications strategy has been prepared and a marketing strategy is currently in development, to be implemented from September 2023. This strategy will incorporate all elements of the WESP to ensure we are proactively marketing and promoting Welsh medium education. We will work closely with WESP stakeholders and the Southeast Wales Welsh Language Education Champion to ensure effective marketing and promotion of Welsh education in RCT.

Develop Welsh Language Immersion provision:

The immersion service has recently been established, working with learners since June 2023. Promoting this service will be a key priority during year 2 of the WESP to ensure its profile is widely raised so that parents/carers are aware of the support available for learners who are latecomers to the language. As we progress through the year, we will continually review the provision and its structure to ensure its fit for purpose to fully immerse learners in the language. The demand for the service will be monitored throughout the year to assess any changes in demand for the service and to evaluate the impact of the service on learners who have accessed support.

Deliver significant investment to improve and provide modern educational facilities for Welsh medium schools, to include:

- Progress with construction of a new Welsh medium school in Rhydyfelin.
- Progress with construction of a new Welsh medium school for YGG Llyn y Forwyn.
- Progress with development options for YG Cwm Rhondda.
- If consultation is successful, progress with proposals for 2 new Welsh medium primary phase LSCs in the new Welsh medium school in Rhydyfelin.
- If funding is received, progress with proposals for childcare and early years developments for YGG Castellau and YGG Penderyn.

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Strengthen links between schools at local universities to increase the number of teaching staff able to teach through the medium of Welsh:

During the first year of the WESP, we've collaborated with Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to promote the initiatives they are running aimed at encouraging students into Welsh medium teaching positions. We will continue to work with the Coleg to strengthen links. A key priority will be to bring together representatives from the Coleg, local universities and our Welsh medium secondary schools to encourage school aged learners to consider teaching as a career pathway and to support those considering these pathways. We also aim to strengthen the promotion of working within education in RCT through improved information and signposting on our website.

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Outcome 1

More nursery children/ three year olds receive their education through the medium of Welsh

KEY ANNUAL DATA

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Data

The data in the table that follows is derived from the latest CIW list of registered and unregistered settings known to the Family Information Service (FIS). It demonstrates the total number of registered and unregistered Welsh and English medium childcare and early years settings alongside the number of places available in RCT.

Table 1.1

Total Number of Welsh and English Medium Childcare and Early Years Settings Available in RCT					
Childcare Type		**Total No. of Registered Settings**	**Total No. of Places**	**Total No. of Unregistered Settings**	**Total No. of Places**
Childminder		98	789	0	0
Day Care	**Full Day Care**	64	2,283	0	0
	Sessional Day Care	22	575	2	Unknown
	Crèches	0	0	0	0
	Out of School Care	13	530	5	Unknown
	Open Access Play Provision	5	290	2	Unknown
	Nanny	2	0	0	0
Total		**204**	**4,467**	**9**	**0**

The data in the table that follows, again derived from the latest CIW list of registered and unregistered settings known to FIS, demonstrates the total number of registered and unregistered Welsh medium childcare and early years settings (both Welsh medium and bilingual) alongside the number of places available in RCT.

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Table 1.2

Total Number of Welsh Medium Childcare and Early Years Settings Available in RCT					
Childcare Type		Total No. of Registered Settings	Total No. of Places	Total No. of Unregistered Settings	Total No. of Places
Childminder		1	25	0	0
Day Care	Full Day Care	20	634	0	0
	Sessional Day Care	6	154	0	0
	Creches	0	0	0	0
	Out of School Care	3	120	3	Unknown
Total		30	933	3	0

PLASC Data

The data in the table below is derived from PLASC and outlines the number of pre-nursery, pre-nursery part-time, nursery and nursery part-time learners attending Welsh medium primary schools for the previous four academic years up to and including 2022-2023. The data for this academic year shows an increase in the numbers attending pre-nursery and pre-nursery part-time however the numbers at nursery and nursery part-time have declined.

Table 1.3

Total Number of Pre-Nursery, Pre-Nursery Part Time, Nursery and Nursery Part Time Learners Attending Welsh Medium Primary Schools Over the Previous Four Academic Years				
Year Group	Academic Year			
	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Pre-Nursery	27	26	18	23
Pre-Nursery Part Time	29	39	32	49
Nursery	406	437	366	359
Nursery Part Time	130	95	145	138
Total	592	597	561	569

The data in the table below, also derived from PLASC, outlines the number of pre-nursery, pre-nursery part-time, nursery and nursery part-time learners attending English medium primary schools for the previous four academic years up to and including 2022-2023.

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Table 1.4

Total Number of Pre-Nursery, Pre-Nursery Part Time, Nursery and Nursery Part Time Learners Attending English Medium Primary Schools Over the Previous Four Academic Years				
Year Group	**Academic Year**			
	2019-2020	**2020-2021**	**2021-2022**	**2022-2023**
Pre-Nursery	95	206	165	160
Pre-Nursery Part Time	262	290	216	202
Nursery	1,311	1,540	1,436	1,430
Nursery Part Time	760	359	512	460
Total	**2,428**	**2,395**	**2,329**	**2,252**

This data demonstrates a decline in the total number of learners in English medium primary schools over the five year period, however this does not correlate with an increased number of learners attending Welsh medium primary schools as a result. Although an additional 8 learners were reported in Welsh medium schools for this academic year, a loss of 77 learners were reported in English medium schools. This indicates that the numbers accessing pre-nursery, pre-nursery part-time, nursery and nursery part-time are falling in general across RCT.

Mudiad Meithrin Data

At the beginning of the academic year, there were 19 Cylchoedd Meithrin in RCT. As of July 2023, there are now 20 Cylchoedd Meithrin in RCT following the opening of Cylch Meithrin Cilfynydd.

The data received by Mudiad Meithrin in the Autumn term for the academic year 2021-2022 demonstrates the total number of children who transitioned from a Cylch to primary education, the numbers transitioned into Welsh medium education and the numbers transitioned into English medium education. The data demonstrates some positives with some settings having majority of the children transferring into Welsh medium education, however there are some pockets of the County Borough where transition rates into English medium education is higher than the transition into Welsh medium education.

Recent sub-group and steering group meetings have highlighted concerns around the accuracy of this data as many settings now offer both Welsh and English medium sessions. This means that the total number of children being accounted for includes children accessing English medium provision via the settings who will naturally transition into English medium primary education. The Local Authority's Education Data Team are working with Mudiad Meithrin on a new 'Data Sharing Agreement' between the Local Authority and Welsh medium early years

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settings in order to gather accurate data on the numbers accessing both Welsh and English medium sessions and the onward monitoring of where these children transition to.

Table 1.5

Cylch	Total No. Transitioned into School	No. Transitioned into Welsh Medium Education	No. Transitioned into English Medium Education
Aberdar	43	24	19
Beddau	25	25	0
Evan James	24	23	1
Llanilltud Faerdref	9	7	2
Penderyn	37	27	10
Pentre'r Eglwys	29	13	16
Rhydyfelin	17	12	5
Seren Fach	41	21	20
Ynysybwl	17	7	10
Abercynon	-	-	-
Bronllwyn	48	38	10
Bysedd Bach (Porth)	28	28	0
Cwm Elai	24	17	7
Glynrhedyn	11	10	1
Llanhari	26	14	12
Llantrisant	12	12	0
Nant Dyrys	32	26	6
Ynyshir/Wattstown	64	27	37
Ysgol Dolau	6	6	0

There are currently 13 Cylchoedd Ti a Fi in RCT. The Headteacher of the new Welsh medium school in Rhydyfelin which is due to open in the next academic year, has been working with Mudiad Meithrin and RCT Childcare Development team to register the school to run Cylch Ti a Fi sessions from October 2023. This provision will continue once the new school opens to learners from September 2024.

Flying Start Data

Since the beginning of this academic year, the number of Welsh medium Flying Start childcare places taken were 125. Of this number, 56 childcare places were taken up following the roll out of the expansion areas. Welsh Medium places taken up also increased and 20% of the expansion places were in Welsh settings during Phase 2 of the expansion and this continues to grow. This is as a direct result of having more Welsh approved providers and a wider geographical spread.

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OUTCOME SUMMARY

Flying Start Expansion

The Flying Start team have continued to work with new childcare providers including childminders to enable them to become Flying Start Approved Providers to increase the choice of provision available and the number of Welsh medium Flying Start places available. This will assist the Local Authority with meeting the demand for places as part of the expansion and will also provide parents with a wider choice of settings to meet their childcare needs and language choice.

The Flying Start team are working closely with Mudiad Meithrin to increase Welsh medium provision across RCT to bring them on board the approved supplier list for Flying Start. At the beginning of this academic year, there were 14 Welsh medium Flying Start Approved Providers in RCT. As of July 2023, there are currently 21 approved providers and Welsh medium places taken up as part of the phase 2A expansion has increased by 20%.

The Flying Start team have also designed a leaflet (Flying Start Bilingual Journey) in partnership with Mudiad Meithrin which is now circulated to every new family when the child is 18 months old via the Family Health Visitor.

Information on the Availability of Welsh Medium Education Provision

The Local Authority's 'Being Bilingual' booklets is an effective way of providing parents/carers with information on Welsh medium education and provision as it covers a range of areas to include:

- The benefits of being bilingual
- Addresses common parental concerns around choosing Welsh medium education
- The journey from Cymraeg i Blant through to Higher Education
- List of Cylchoedd Meithrin in RCT along with contact details
- List of Welsh medium schools in RCT along with contact details
- Links through to additional support for parents/carers through partner organisations such as Cymraeg i Blant, Learn Welsh Cymru and Welsh4Parents.

During this academic year, the contact details for RCT schools were updated and as such, amendments were needed to reflect the changes in our booklets. The digital version of the booklet has been updated and replaced on the website and leaflet inserts with updated contact details have been designed and printed to be placed inside the physical copies of the booklets. Further amendments were made to the digital booklets to include narrative around the support now available via the Local Authority's newly established Welsh language immersion provision. The immersion teacher has worked with the Local Authority's Design team to design and create promotional leaflets which have been shared with all Welsh medium schools in RCT. Distribution of these leaflets will be extended to Cylchoedd Meithrin, along with the Being Bilingual booklets.

The Local Authority's Childcare Development and Education teams have attended local events such as Parti Ponty and the Teddy Bears Picnic to distribute booklets and leaflets to the general public, taking advantage of the opportunities to directly engage with parents/carers who may be considering Welsh medium education as an option for their child. Wider distribution of the booklets will be completed over the summer period to include RCT, Merthyr Tydfil and Bridgend birth registration services and Health Visitors.

A review of the Local Authority's corporate website has been undertaken and as a result a dedicated Welsh medium education page is now available to ensure options around Welsh medium education provision are available to parents/carers. This section of the website provides an overview of the benefits of being bilingual, links to finding your local Cylch Meithrin, links to finding schools in your catchment areas, and links through to organisations who can support to include Mudiad Meithrin, Learn Welsh Wales, Menter Iaith. This is the first step undertaken in reviewing our corporate website. During Year 2 of the WESP, further amendments to the website are planned to assist with the uptake of Welsh medium education.

During this academic year, FIS has launched a new platform which is a standalone website to the corporate website. The FIS officer is working with the Childcare Development team to incorporate changes to the new platform to include sections relating to Welsh medium childcare, early years, schools and learning. FIS team ensure the Dewis platform is regularly reviewed to ensure information available to parents/carers is as accurate as possible.

The Local Authority's School Admissions team post admissions deadline dates via corporate social media platforms, along with a message promoting Welsh medium education. This is now being done with each school admission application window. The School Admissions team closely monitor any in-year transfer requests to ensure these have been completed following the changes made to the in-year transfer process, which is detailed under Outcome 3. School Admissions officers have also received information around the late immersion provision which is promoted to any prospective parents/carers.

Partnership Working

The Local Authority's Childcare Development team offer support and guidance to childcare settings that would like to develop and expand their Welsh medium provision by offering business support, new/expansion of provision grants and signposting to relevant agencies, such as Mudiad Meithrin. Capital funding bids have recently been submitted to Welsh Government to expand and develop Welsh medium services in two areas of RCT. These bids were developed in collaboration with Mudiad Meithrin, Flying Start colleagues and the relevant Welsh medium schools. The outcome of these bids has not yet been decided.

Representatives from Cymraeg i Blant and Mudiad Meithrin have attended events such as Parti Ponty and the Teddy Bears Picnic to promote Welsh medium provision and the support available to parents/carers. A member of the Local Authority's Education team also attended the events to promote what's available locally through distribution of the Being Bilingual booklets along with Cymraeg i Blant and Mudiad Meithrin's own promotional materials. Mudiad Meithrin have created a compilation of promotional videos demonstrating the advantages of attending a Cylch Meithrin and choosing Welsh medium education. These resources, along with promotional resources received by Welsh Government, have been shared with the Local Authority's Marketing team to be promoted via the Local Authority's corporate social media platforms and with FIS to be promoted via their new website.

Cymraeg i Blant have recently appointed a new officer who will be commencing the role from September 2023. The officer will deliver Cymraeg i Blant sessions across the County Borough to include story and song time and baby yoga. We will work closely with the new officer to ensure these sessions are widely marketed and promoted to assist with uptake.

Planning of Welsh Medium Provision

The Local Authority's Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) identified areas of RCT where future development is needed. As part of the CSA, mapping exercises were conducted which identified geographical gaps in Welsh medium provision across RCT. Consultations conducted

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as part of the CSA identified that parents/carers in the Taf Ely area of RCT were most likely to require Welsh medium childcare. The Local Authority's Childcare Development team have met with Mudiad Meithrin and held conversations on the findings of these exercises. Further areas have been identified by Mudiad Meithrin through their own exercises which has been shared with the Childcare Development team. The findings of these exercises have identified areas of RCT where new developments are needed. These areas will be prioritised for development in partnership with Mudiad Meithrin during Year 2 of the WESP.

Promoting Access to Education Through the Medium of Welsh

Under section 10 of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008, all Local Authorities have a statutory duty to provide learners with access to education and training through the medium of Welsh. The Measure outlines that free transport to their nearest suitable school is provided if they reside beyond safe walking distance. The law relating to safe walking distance is defined as two miles for learners of compulsory school age receiving primary education and three miles for learners of compulsory school age receiving secondary education. The Local Authority has exercised the discretionary powers afforded to it under the Measure to make a more generous provision to learners, as set out below:

- The eligibility criterion for walking distance for learners receiving compulsory primary education at their nearest suitable school has been set at 1½ miles, instead of 2 miles.
- Free transport to the nearest suitable school, where places are available, is provided to learners who meet the ½ mile eligibility criterion from the start of the Foundation Phase (the start of the school term after their third birthday), rather than the start of compulsory education (the start of the school term after their fifth birthday).
- The eligibility criterion for walking distance for learners receiving compulsory secondary education at their nearest suitable school has been set at 2 miles instead of 3 miles.

The current policy is that learners attending the nearest Welsh medium or dual language school receive free transport in accordance with its agreed policy on walking distance and safe routes.

A review has been undertaken to identify the number of Welsh medium schools which do not currently have a Welsh medium early years setting co-located on the school site, or in close proximity to the school. The outcome of this review demonstrated that there are only 2 Welsh medium schools in RCT without a setting co-located, or in close proximity of the school. However, both of these schools have settings located within less than a mile of the school. We will continue to monitor the numbers attending these settings to ensure any notable changes in relation to the numbers attending and transitioning into primary education is monitored and actioned effectively.

The Local Authority's 21st Century Schools team continue to progress and deliver projects to facilitate growth for Welsh medium childcare and early years settings in RCT. During this academic year, work was completed on a new sessional childcare facility creating an additional 30 registered places at YGG Aberdar. The setting opened to learners from September 2022 and has been successful. The setting has already expanded their offer to include afternoon sessions due to high demand.

Plans for a new dedicated childcare facility to be built co-located on the new site of the new Welsh medium school at YGG Llyn y Forwyn have progressed during this academic year. Enablement works have begun on the site with construction expected to commence over the summer period. The Local Authority's Childcare Development team have already met with the childcare provider to explain the expectations for the new settings with regards to expanding

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their provision and its promotion to new parents/carers. This support will be ongoing over Year 2 of the WESP.

Outcome 1 Sub-Group

A sub-group has been established to focus solely on each outcome of the WESP. The sub-groups provide an effective focus for the Local Authority in partnership with external groups and organisations. The sub-group have met virtually on a termly basis to review the actions listed on the Outcome 1 Annual Work Plan and provide updates on any progress made and to discuss next steps for actions, where appropriate. The sub-group meetings have provided opportunities to collaborate with partners such as Mudiad Meithrin, Cymraeg i Blant, RhAG and Menter Iaith as well as representatives from different school cluster groups. These meetings have strengthened partnership working and allowed for ideas to be shared amongst key partners to ensure planning of Welsh medium childcare provision in RCT is effective and co-ordinated.

IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

As referred to above, we have a dedicated group focussing solely on this outcome. The Service Director of 21st Century Schools and Transformation leads this sub-group and membership includes internal officers, representation from Welsh medium primary schools, Health Visitors, and external partners to include Mudiad Meithrin, Cymraeg i Blant, RhAG, Menter Iaith and Dysgu Cymraeg.

The initial sub-group meetings held at the beginning of this academic year focussed on developing the work plan which details the overarching targets, the actions and the key activities required to achieve the targets. The Outcome 1 Sub-group meets on a termly basis to review the targets and actions listed on the work plan to provide an opportunity for members to provide updates on any progress made, where appropriate, and to identify ways to move forward with certain actions. These meetings have been held virtually and have had good levels of engagement. The sub-group lead will review end dates of actions on the work plan to ensure the group remains on targets and in situations where the end date has surpassed, questions will be asked as to why and follow on steps agreed upon to ensure we move forward and don't miss any targets. Following each meeting, minutes of the meeting are shared with members of the sub-group and the 'Progress/Evaluation' column on the work plan is updated with any comments made during the meeting.

OUTCOME LEVEL RISKS

- Recruitment of qualified Welsh medium staff to work in childcare and early years settings:

Issues being faced at present with recruiting qualified Welsh medium staff. This is preventing some settings from offering further sessions as they do not have the staff to do this.

- Sustainability of settings:

New and current settings need to be sustainable if we are to encourage uptake amongst parents/carers. We need to consider where settings are being set up and how we're signposting parents/carers to Welsh medium opportunities.

- Falling birth rates across RCT:

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The live birth information received from the Local Health Board indicates that birth rates in general are falling in RCT. This will impact both Welsh and English medium settings and our projected targets as we progress through the WESP.

- Flying Start expansion:

Some settings are reluctant to become approved providers due to concerns around the difficulty of the online procurement system which must be completed to become an approved provider.

- The closure of settings impacting school numbers:

For example, in the catchment area of YGG Ynyswen, there were previously 3 Cylchoedd Meithrin but now there's only 1 which is located next door to the school site. This has greatly impacted the numbers at the school which have halved following the closure of the other settings.

- The location of settings:

In line with the risk identified above, closure of other Cylchoedd within catchment areas can greatly impact the numbers at the school.

ASSURANCE / MITIGATION ACTION

- Recruitment of qualified Welsh medium staff to work in childcare and early years settings:
  - o We need to find out where these types of jobs are being advertised the broaden the channels of advertising to include:
    - Education based job searching portals (for example, e-teach)
    - Social media groups – The Local Authority has a closed social media group for all childcare providers which can be used to promote job opportunities.
    - Schools' social media groups – advertise to parents/carers who may potentially be interested.

  - o Engage with Welsh medium secondary schools, colleges and universities to support students to undertake the qualifications required for these posts.

  - o Make working in the Welsh medium childcare sector more attractive – low pay offer, increasing responsibility and qualification requirements are hampering this. Intervention is needed at a national level if we're to make an impact.

- Sustainability of settings:
  - o Continue to promote financial support for settings via the Local Authority, Welsh Government and Mudiad Meithrin grant schemes.
  - o Be more proactive in signposting settings to business support for budget planning and marketing.

- Falling birth rates across RCT:
  - o Mudiad Meithrin recently met with the Local Authority's Education Data team and discussed this in more detail. This data needs to be used more strategically to plan Welsh medium provision across the County Borough based on areas where births are occurring.

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- Flying Start expansion:
  - The Flying Start team are working directly with settings to support them with going through the online procurement system. The team have visited various settings in RCT to help and have tried to make the process as straightforward as possible. The team are looking into the possibility of delivering workshops to settings to support them in becoming approved providers.

- The closure of settings impacting school numbers:
  - A co-ordinated approach is needed to plan out provision between the Local Authority's Childcare Development team and Mudiad Meithrin to plug the gaps in provision across RCT. The findings of mapping exercises to be used to inform areas of the County Borough where new provision is needed.

- The location of settings:
  - Almost every Welsh medium primary school in RCT has a setting co-located, or in close proximity, to the school.
  - Findings of mapping exercises to be used to identify other areas of school catchments where development of provision is needed to support an increase in numbers accessing Welsh medium primary education to make access to Welsh medium childcare and education as geographically convenient as possible.

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Outcome 2

More reception class children/ five year olds receive their education through the medium of Welsh

KEY ANNUAL DATA

PLASC Data

The data in the table that follows is derived from PLASC and outlines the total number of primary school aged learners attending primary schools in RCT, split by Welsh and English medium for the previous five academic years up to and including 2022-2023. The data demonstrates that the split between the numbers attending Welsh medium and English medium primary schools has remained consistent over the previous five academic years.

Table 2.1

Total Number of Primary School Aged Learners Attending Primary Schools Split by Welsh and English Medium Over the Previous Five Academic Years										
	Academic Year									
Category	**2018-2019**		**2019-2020**		**2020-2021**		**2021-2022**		**2022-2023**	
Welsh Medium Primary Schools	4,269	19%	4,220	19%	4,152	18.8%	4,097	18.9%	4,038	18.3%
English Medium Primary Schools	18,153	81%	18,078	81%	17,894	81.2%	17,627	81.1%	18,021	81.7%
Total No. Primary Schools	**22,422**		**22,298**		**22,046**		**21,724**		**22,059**	

The data in the table that follows is derived from PLASC and outlines the total number of reception/five year old learners attending Welsh medium primary schools for the previous five academic years, up to and including 2022-2023. The data demonstrates that the number of reception/five year old learners attending Welsh medium primary schools has slowly decreased over the last 3 academic years.

Table 2.2

Total Number of Reception/Five Year Old Learners Attending Welsh Medium Primary Schools Over the Previous Five Academic Years					
Year Group	**Academic Year**				
	2018-2019	**2019-2020**	**2020-2021**	**2021-2022**	**2022-2023**
Reception	517	565	528	523	501
Reception Part Time	1	0	0	0	0
Total	**518**	**565**	**528**	**523**	**501**

The data in the table below, also derived from PLASC, outlines the total number of reception/five year old learners attending English medium primary schools for the previous five academic years, up to and including 2022-2023. The data demonstrates a decrease in the number of reception/five year old learners attending English medium schools over the last 3 years which is consistent with the data available on Welsh medium schools. This indicates that the number of reception/five year old learners attending primary schools across the board is decreasing.

Table 2.3

Total Number of Reception/Five Year Old Learners Attending English Medium Primary Schools Over the Previous Five Academic Years					
Year Group	Academic Year				
	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Reception	2,136	2,049	2,087	1,943	1,993
Reception Part Time	4	26	19	4	14
Total	2,140	2,075	2,106	1,947	2,007

The data in the table below is derived from PLASC and outlines surplus capacities in Welsh medium and dual language primary schools in RCT for the previous four academic years, up to and including 2022-2023. The data demonstrates that the percentage of surplus capacities in Welsh medium primary schools has increased to 22.8% during the last four years.

Table 2.4

Surplus Capacity in Welsh Medium Primary Schools in RCT				
Category	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Primary and Dual Language Schools	19.6%	20.7%	21.6%	22.8%

The data in the table that follows is derived from PLASC and demonstrates the number and percentage of Black, Asian and minority ethnic background learners attending all schools in RCT. The data has been broken down further to outline the number of learners attending Welsh medium schools in RCT for the previous five academic years, up to and including the academic year 2022-2023.

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Table 2.5

Number and Percentage of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Background Learners Attending Welsh Medium Schools in RCT										
	Academic Year									
	2018-2019		2019-2020		2020-2021		2021-2022		2022-2023	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total No. of Learners	2,103		2,145		2,387		2,609		3,004	
No. of Learners Attending Welsh Medium Schools	210	9.99%	165	7.69%	206	8.63%	200	7.67%	210	6.99%

OUTCOME SUMMARY

Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme

In line with the new guidance for the Sustainable Communities for Learning rolling programme, the priorities of which are:

- Transforming learning environments and learner experience
- Meeting demand for school places
- Improving condition and suitability of the education estate
- Developing sustainable learning environments
- Supporting the community

We are currently working on our strategic outline programme for our new 9 year programme and will ensure the programme aligns with the WESP objectives, namely:

- Ensuring that every child in RCT has access to Welsh medium education in a school of their choosing and that there is sufficient supply to meet demand.

- Delivering significant investment to improve and provide modern educational facilities for Welsh medium schools and increase Welsh medium learner places at both primary and secondary school level.

- Extend Welsh medium Learning Support Classes and ALN provision across primary and secondary school settings.

Projects identified will form part of WESP sub-group discussions to ensure projects are aligned with our objectives. As we monitor and progress with project investment, the WESP targets will be reviewed to ensure identified project proposals are tailored to be consistent with the aims and objectives of the WESP.

We continue to deliver investment in Welsh medium primary education through the Band B Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme. At the beginning of this academic year, we

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delivered an extension to YGG Aberdar providing additional facilities and an additional 72 places at the school.

A new Welsh medium primary school is currently being constructed in Rhydyfelin on the site of the current dual language school at Heol y Celyn Primary. The new school will welcome the school's Welsh medium pupils and those currently attending YGG Pont Sion Norton. The school will contain first-class education facilities in a 21ˢᵗ Century building. Construction work is underway on the school site and is moving at speed. The school is on track to open to learners from September 2024.

We have progressed with plans to deliver a brand new Welsh medium school on a new site for YGG Llyn y Forwyn. Enablement work has begun onsite with construction due to commence over the summer period. The new school will open to learners from YGG Llyn y Forwyn from September 2024.

Impact of School Organisation Proposals

In line with the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013, school organisation proposals must be subject to consultation period before the proposal can be published. The consultation document must include information around the extent to which the proposal would support the targets of our WESP and how the proposal would expand or reduce Welsh language provision.

There are statutory requirements for Welsh Language Impact Assessments to be completed on all our school organisation proposals. The Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015 requires the Local Authority to ensure the person making, reviewing or reviewing a policy decision considers the effects the policy decision would have on opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language or treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language. The Welsh Language Impact Assessments identifies:

- Any effect of school organisation proposals on the Welsh language (positive, negative or both).
- Notes ways of promoting the Welsh language including the use of Welsh.
- Any adverse effects on the Welsh language.
- Due regard to the various effects listed in the Welsh Language Standards.

To complete the impact assessment, key policy areas must be reviewed to assess the impact of the proposal, this includes the WESP. Impact assessments are reviewed by the Local Authority's Welsh Language Services and feedback is provided on the strengths and any potential areas for improvement. Once amendments are made, impact assessment are reviewed by the Officer Review Panel who give consideration to the different impacts identified and robustly scrutinise the proposals being considered.

Welsh Medium Provision in English Medium Schools

The introduction of the new Curriculum of Wales has placed statutory duties on all schools to incorporate Welsh into their curriculum as a mandatory requirement. To gather information on what's being done across English medium schools in RCT to promote the Welsh language, several schools were contacted and a total of 12 schools responded.

From the responses received, it's evident that the Siarter Iaith Cymraeg Campus programme run by CSCJES is having a positive impact on the increasing use of Welsh in English medium schools. Some of the common themes throughout the responses is the introduction of the Helpwr Heddiw/Helpwr y Dydd initiative and the establishment of Criw Cymraeg. The Helpwr Heddiw initiative is being used across all schools that responded, recognising learners use of Welsh using appropriate sentence patterns for their age. Each school has a Criw Cymraeg focussing on

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developing and promoting the use of Welsh throughout the school. Criw Cymraeg activities across English medium schools include Welsh playground games, 'Siaradwyr Gymraeg yr Wythnos' certificates for learners who are chosen for their use of Welsh throughout the week and Cegin Cyw at lunchtimes whereby children ask for meals in Welsh. Some of the schools have linked in with Welsh medium schools in RCT to develop Criw Cymraeg activities and in some areas of the county, learners from these schools have attended English medium schools to support learners with the development and use of their Welsh language skills. All schools that responded provide weekly Welsh assemblies introducing the 'word', 'phrase' and 'question' of the week and focusing on different elements of Welsh language, culture, and heritage.

Schools are also using these opportunities to engage with parents/carers and providing support on how to develop children's Welsh language skills at home. Several schools reported that they have utilised the opportunities available with CSCJES to develop their Welsh language skills:

- Blaengwawr Primary School: 1 teacher has undertaken the Welsh Sabbatical Scheme.
- Llwydcoed Primary School: 1 teacher has undertaken the Welsh Sabbatical Scheme.
- Cefn & Craig yr Hesg: 1 teacher is on the course for September 2023 cohort.

It's positive to see that a number of schools have accessed support via the professional development opportunities available with CSCJES and further applications have been made for next year's Welsh Sabbatical Schemes in order to upskill staff and bring improvements to Welsh provision in our English medium schools. An increased use of incidental Welsh was reported by all schools both inside and outside of the classroom by both children and staff. A number of success stories were also shared, to include:

- Pontygwaith Primary School:

Holding a weekly parent/pupil workshop every Friday. The Welsh lead at the school spends the first half of the session teaching parents/carers Welsh skills with the children being invited to join their parents/carers during the second half of the session to show what they've learnt. This has proved to be very popular and a huge success at the school. Following on from the success of these sessions, the school now run a weekly Welsh class for the community led by the Welsh lead. This class runs after school every Thursday and have even had adults attending the sessions who aren't parents/carers of children attending the school.

- SS Gabriel & Raphael Primary School:

The whole school won a heritage award for their work on the Cynefin project which focuses on Welsh stories, songs, famous people, landscape, local artists, song writing, and performances based on your local area.

- Cwm Clydach Primary School:

The Welsh lead at the school has attended Tric a Chlic training and the school have now purchased the resources. This will be rolled out at the school from September 2023.

- Williamstown Primary School:

The school have requested a visit from the ambassador for the National Eisteddfod and have put themselves forward to participate in events.

- Cefn & Craig yr Hesg Primary Schools:

Teachers at the school have set up a Welsh choir focussing on learning and performing through Welsh.

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Schools Transitioning to a Different Category

In September 2021, Penderyn Primary became solely a Welsh medium school. The Head of Penderyn Primary is a member of the WESP Outcome 2 Sub-group to support increasing numbers at the new Welsh medium school in an area of RCT where there was not a Welsh school previously.

A new Welsh medium primary school is currently being constructed in Rhydyfelin on the site of the current dual language school at Heol y Celyn Primary. The new school will welcome the school's Welsh medium pupils and those currently attending YGG Pont Sion Norton and will open to learners from September 2024.

Late Immersion Support

In February 2023, the Local Authority successfully recruited a specialist teacher to deliver Welsh language immersion provision to learners who are latecomers to Welsh medium education. Two Learning Support Assistants have also been recruited with the relevant skills and experience needed to support the delivery of immersion provision in RCT. The immersion lead has visited other immersion centres and networked with a range of practitioners to share best practices to identify the way in which provision can be rolled out in RCT. The provision will adapt a peripatetic model of delivery with the immersion team going out to the Welsh medium schools to support learners. The immersion lead has prepared a delivery plan for the roll out of provision and has successfully received funding to purchase resources.

The immersion lead has visited all Welsh medium schools in RCT to share information and resources with the schools and to promote the services available. The immersion team have created a Seesaw account where they'll be able to share photos of immersion sessions and learners progress, with permission of the parent/guardian. Immersion provision is being prioritised for a marketing campaign over the summer period to promote the support available to latecomers to the language. Changes are currently being made to the Local Authority's corporate website for information and signposting purposes. The immersion lead has worked with the Local Authority's Design team to create and print promotional leaflets which have been distributed to the community during events such as Parti Ponty and the Teddy Bears Picnic. Wider distribution of the leaflets will be a priority action during Year 2 of the WESP.

The immersion lead also attended an open day event at the new Welsh medium school in Rhydyfelin whereby parents/carers of learners currently attending the dual language school at Heol y Celyn, were in attendance. The immersion lead spoke with parents/carers and promoted the support available through immersion for parents/carers who did not want to move their children to the new English medium school site. This was the first time many had heard of the service as it's something new to the authority. The immersion lead will engage with parents/carers again closer to the time of the new school opening.

The immersion team are currently supporting learners during the final term of this academic year with 3 learners accessing support:
- 1 from Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castellau
- 1 from Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Evan James
- 1 from Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tonyrefail

The team started to support these learners from the 12th of June 2023 and will continue to support from September. Baseline assessments were completed in the first instance to have a clear understanding of each learners needs so that the service can be tailored to support these learners. Progress monitoring and reporting documents have been created which will be shared with the relevant school and parents/carers to show progress. Provision will be fully operational from

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September 2023 and the team have already recruited 2 further learners to commence support from September.

Outcome 2 Sub-Group

A sub-group has been established to focus solely on each outcome of the WESP. The sub-groups provide an effective focus for the Local Authority in partnership with external groups and organisations. The sub-group have met both virtually and in-person on a termly basis to review the actions listed on the Outcome 2 Annual Work Plan and provide updates on any progress made and to discuss next steps for actions, where appropriate. The sub-group meetings have provided opportunities to collaborate and share ideas amongst different school cluster groups.

IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

We have a dedicated group focussing solely on this outcome. The Head of Achievement leads this sub-group and membership includes internal officers and representation from Welsh medium primary schools.

The initial sub-group meetings at the beginning of this academic year focussed on developing the work plan which details the overarching targets, the actions and the key activities required to achieve the targets. The Outcome 2 Sub-group meets on a termly basis to review the targets and actions listed on the work plan to provide an opportunity for members to provide updates on any progress made, where appropriate, and to identify ways to move forward with certain actions. These meetings have been held both virtually and in-person and have had good levels of engagement. The sub-group lead will review end dates of actions on the work plan to ensure the group remains on targets and in situations where the end date has surpassed, questions will be asked as to why and follow on steps agreed upon to ensure we move forward and don't miss any targets. Following each meeting, minutes of the meeting are shared with members of the sub-group and the 'Progress/Evaluation' column on the work plan is updated with any comments made during the meeting.

OUTCOME LEVEL RISKS

- Falling birth rates across RCT:

The live birth information received from the Local Health Board indicates that birth rates in general are falling in RCT. This will impact both Welsh and English medium schools and our projected targets as we progress through the WESP.

- Low uptake for immersion provision:

As this is a new service to RCT, we're not able to predict demand for the service yet.

ASSURANCE / MITIGATION ACTION

- Falling birth rates across RCT:

The live birth data received by the Local Health Board needs to be used more to strategically plan Welsh medium provision in RCT based on areas where births are occurring. Wider promotion on the benefits of receiving education through the medium of Welsh to be implemented.

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- Low uptake for immersion provision:

Implement a marketing campaign to promote the support available to latecomers.

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Outcome 3

More children continue to improve their Welsh language skills when transferring from one stage of their statutory education to another

KEY ANNUAL DATA

PLASC Data

The data in the table below is derived from PLASC and outlines the transition rates of learners between each key stage for Welsh medium primary, secondary and through schools for the previous five academic years, up to and including 2022-2023. Please note that the transition rates between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 takes into consideration learners from Merthyr Tydfil County Borough attending YG Rhydywaun due to there not being a Welsh medium secondary school in that county. Similarly, Ysgol Llanhari in the South Taf area sees learners attending from Bridgend County Borough due to the geographical location of the school.

Table 3.1

Transition Rates of Learners Between Each Key Stage for Welsh Medium Primary, Secondary and Through Schools for the Previous Five Academic Years					
	Academic Year				
Transition	**2018-2019**	**2019-2020**	**2020-2021**	**2021-2022**	**2022-2023**
Foundation Phase to Key Stage 2	97.4%	97.5%	96.1%	95.8%	97.9%
Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3	97.3%	94%	94.7%	95.4%	95.5%
Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4	98.2%	97.3%	98.7%	98.3%	96.1%
Key Stage 4 to Key Stage 5	53.5%	55.9%	48.5%	48.9%	45.1%

It's positive to see the percentage of learners transitioning from Foundation Phase to Key Stage 2 has increased this year and is now back to pre-Covid percentages. Transition rates from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 has remained static over the previous five academic years however the transition from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4 shows a decline in the percentages transition through this phase this year. The percentages of learners transitioning from Key Stage 4 to Key Stage 5 is concerning as the percentage has decreased by almost 10 percentage points over the duration of the last five years.

However, when comparing this data with the transition rates of learners between each Key Stage for English medium schools, the data is much the same. The percentages transitioning

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from Foundation Phase through each Key Stage up until Key Stage 4 are consistent with the percentages transitioning in Welsh medium schools. The transition from Key Stage 4 to Key Stage 5 in English medium schools also shows a decrease of almost 10 percentage points over the duration of the last five years. This indicates that the transition between these key stages is not only an issue being faced in Welsh medium education but across the board.

Table 3.2

Transition Rates of Learners Between Each Key Stage for English Medium Primary, Secondary and All Through Schools for the Previous Five Academic Years					
	Academic Year				
Transition	**2018-2019**	**2019-2020**	**2020-2021**	**2021-2022**	**2022-2023**
Foundation Phase to Key Stage 2	97.6%	97.6%	97.5%	98.5%	97.6%
Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3	95.9%	96.1%	96.1%	95.1%	95.8%
Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4	98.2%	98.0%	98.5%	97.7%	97.1%
Key Stage 4 to Key Stage 5	42.6%	44.0%	45.4%	40.7%	33.5%

OUTCOME SUMMARY

Monitoring Linguistic Progression
The linguistic progression of learners is monitored by the Local Authority's Education Data team and begins from the earliest stages of statutory education. Once PLASC data is available, the data team analyse the data and prepare pupil projection reports which are shared with all Welsh medium schools in RCT. The data is further analysed to identify any notable data changes in relation to Welsh medium education. If any anomalies in the data are identified, or if any of the Headteachers request to discuss this further, the data team will convene meetings with the respective Headteachers.

To ensure we can monitor linguistic progression from pre-statutory education phase, the Local Authority's Education Data team are working with Mudiad Meithrin on a new 'Data Sharing Agreement' between the Local Authority and Welsh medium early years settings. This agreement will allow for accurate data to be gathered on the numbers accessing the settings and the numbers transitioning onwards to primary education. Through implementing this new data agreement, this will enable the Education Data team to monitor the transition of children from early years settings to Welsh medium primary education and onwards through each stage of their statutory education. As we move forward with the ten-year plan, this will simplify the process of monitoring transition through each stage of statutory education as well as

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helping us to identify the stages where learners are transitioning out of Welsh medium education to inform future planning of targeted marketing and promotional strategies.

During the first year of the WESP, changes have been made to improve the process of handling in-year transfer requests. This change means that in-year transfer forms can only be provided by the current school. The current Headteacher must have signed the form before the school admissions team will process the application. This change has been implemented and all Headteachers in both Welsh and English medium schools have been made aware of the change. This will improve communications between Welsh and English medium schools, ensuring transfers are actioned in a co-ordinated manner and providing the opportunity for the current Headteacher to engage with the parents/carers prior to making the move. The message around this change continues to be reinforced during regular Headteacher meetings. As this is a new change to the process, we do not have data available as of yet to monitor the impact of this change.

Transition Arrangements from Primary to Secondary Schools

Each Welsh medium secondary school in RCT has a Cluster Curriculum Policy in place between them and the primary schools within their cluster which outlines their transition arrangements for the academic year, in line with the new Welsh Statutory Instruments: 2022 No.566 (W.131) Education, Wales, The Transition from Primary to Secondary School (Wales) Regulations 2022.

There are 4 Welsh medium secondary schools in RCT, each of which has their own transition arrangements with the primary schools within their cluster. The examples below provide a brief overview of the some of the arrangements in place in line with each schools' curriculum policy:

Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun:
- Transition days at the school for Year 6 learners of the cluster primary schools to provide opportunities to visit the school, meet other learners in their year group and have a feel for some of the lessons.
- Open evenings/information evenings for parents/carers of Year 6 pupils of the cluster primary schools.
- Teachers at the school to visit Year 5 learners of the cluster primary schools to host engagement activities.
- Share resources and upcoming open events with parents/carers of Year 6 learners via the 'Year 6' section of the schools' website.
- Additional transition days for vulnerable learners/learners with ALN.
- Cluster schools' sports competition day in the summer term.
- Cluster schools Year 6 residential transition weekend event at Llangrannog (postponed this year, recommencing in 2023-2024).

Ysgol Garth Olwg:
- Transition days at the school for Year 6 learners to visit the school and other learners in their year group from other cluster schools.
- Transition days at the school for Year 5 learners.
- Transition meetings held for parents/carers of learners in Year 5 and Year 6 of the cluster primary schools.
- The transition team visits all primary schools within the cluster to host engagement activities.

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Ysgol Llanhari:
- Host an open day for Year 6 parents/carers of the cluster primary schools to visit the school and speak directly with the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher and the Transition Lead.
- Open evening/information evening event held for Year 6 parents/carers to of cluster primary schools to attend and gather information/ask any questions.
- Teachers from the foreign languages department of the school visits Year 5 and Year 6 learners of the cluster primary schools to provide weekly language lessons.
- ALNCo visits each cluster primary school to discuss the needs of vulnerable learners/learners with ALN.
- Additional open evening/information evening for Year 6 vulnerable learners/learners with ALN and parents/carers of each cluster primary school to attend and meet with the inclusion team.

Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda:
- Offer opportunities for parents/carers of vulnerable learners/learners with ALN to visit the school to meet the inclusion team.
- Host information evenings for parents/carers of Year 6 learners at the school.
- As a cluster, funding a transition teacher to support transition arrangements.
- Arrange a trip to watch the schools' drama production for Year 6 learners of each cluster primary school.
- Cluster transition teacher spends 1 day a week in each cluster primary school to work directly with Year 6 learners.
- Cluster transition teachers continues to support Year 7 learners once they've started secondary school.
- Transition days for Year 6 learners of cluster primary schools to visit the school, meet other learners in their year group and experience some of the different lessons available.
- Hold transition days at each cluster primary school in agreed areas of learning, whereby staff from the school will visit each cluster school.
- Year 6 residential transition weekend event at Llangrannog with each cluster primary school.
- Cluster schools' sports competition day in the summer term.
- Year 7 residential trip during the first term of school.

Continuity of Arrangements for Learners Receiving Welsh Medium Education
Work has been ongoing across the region and with partners such as Coleg y Cymoedd to ensure continuity of arrangements for learners receiving Welsh medium education. On a regional basis, CSCJES have been working with Welsh medium secondary schools across the region to promote the opportunities available via the E-sgol programme. E-sgol have visited Ysgol Llanhari to promote the opportunities available. Ysgol Llanhari have taken advantage of the E-sgol programme and have partnered with YG Llangynwyd, which is in Bridgend County Borough, for the delivery of the programme. E-sgol have also presented to the Headteachers who are members of the Gyda'n Gilydd group however to date only Ysgol Llanhari have engaged with the programme.

E-sgol held a conference event on the 3rd of July to promote the programme to schools across the region. The conference provided schools with an opportunity to further understand what is available through E-sgol, looking at successful case studies and networking with other schools. The conference was widely advertised with secondary schools across in RCT via CSCJES and the Local Authority's Education team communication channels as well as being promoted during WESP steering group and sub-group meetings. A total of 39 attendees

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across the region attending the conference, however E-sgol have confirmed that no further schools have shown interest as of yet. During Year 2 of the WESP, we will continue to work with CSCJES and Welsh medium secondary school to promote the support available and the benefits of accessing the provision. Data on the number of courses being delivered via the Ysgol Llanhari and YG Llangynwyd partnership can be found under Outcome 4 (Table 4.8).

Welsh medium secondary schools have been working Coleg y Cymoedd to explore opportunities for collaborative working between the schools and the college to ensure a more extensive Welsh medium curriculum is available for Key Stage 5 learners. Coleg y Cymoedd Senior Leadership team and the Recruitment and Progression Manager have met with representatives from YG Rhydywaun, Ysgol Garth Olwg and Ysgol Llanhari to discuss 14-16 pathways with the aim of aiding retention of learners into Welsh medium sixth form education. Discussions went well and the college are now putting together a new 14-16 pathways Key Stage 5 collaborative offer. This will be monitored during the next academic year to ensure the conversations around this continue.

Outcome 3 Sub-Group

A sub-group has been established to focus solely on each outcome of the WESP. The sub-groups provide an effective focus for the Local Authority in partnership with external groups and organisations. The sub-group have met both virtually and in-person on a termly basis to review the actions listed on the Outcome 3 Annual Work Plan and provide updates on any progress made and to discuss next steps for actions, where appropriate.

The sub-group meetings have provided opportunities to collaborate and share ideas amongst different school cluster groups and partner organisations. For example, transition arrangements being used in Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda were shared with Ysgol Llanhari who have now adapted some of these arrangements into their own transition arrangements to improve their transition rates from primary to secondary, especially between the cluster schools which are not on the school site. During these meetings, different sets of data have been reviewed and analysed by the group which has provided opportunities for those on the group to access the data sooner. The group has looked at baseline numbers of Welsh medium schools at each year group, numbers transitioning from primary to secondary education and pupil forecasts. This has welcomed open discussions around these key areas of transition and provided opportunities for the Headteachers who are members of this group, to speak directly with the Head of Data Systems and Admissions around different areas of data.

IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

We have a dedicated group focussing solely on this outcome. The Head of Service Transformation, Data Systems, Admissions and Governors leads this sub-group and membership includes internal officers, representation from Welsh medium primary schools, Coleg y Cymoedd and Menter Iaith RCT.

The initial sub-group meetings at the beginning of this academic year focussed on developing the work plan which details the overarching targets, the actions and the key activities required to achieve the targets. The Outcome 3 Sub-group meets on a termly basis to review the targets and actions listed on the work plan to provide an opportunity for members to provide updates on any progress made, where appropriate, and to identify ways to move forward with certain actions. These meetings have been held both virtually and in-person and have had good levels of engagement. The sub-group lead will review end dates of actions on the work

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plan to ensure the group remains on targets and in situations where the end date has surpassed, questions will be asked as to why and follow on steps agreed upon to ensure we move forward and don't miss any targets. Following each meeting, minutes of the meeting are shared with members of the sub-group and the 'Progress/Evaluation' column on the work plan is updated with any comments made during the meeting.

OUTCOME LEVEL RISKS

- Falling birth rates across RCT:

The live birth information received from the Local Health Board indicates that birth rates in general are falling across RCT. This will impact both Welsh and English medium settings and our projected targets as we progress through the WESP.

- Transition data available on the numbers transitioning from early years settings into statutory education is not accurate:

The data available on numbers transitioning from Welsh medium childcare and early years settings into statutory education is not accurate. The data available is gathered verbally through settings have discussions with parents/carers. The data also includes numbers accessing English medium sessions and therefore needs to be looked at in more detail.

- Retention of learners from Key Stage 4 to Key Stage 5 in Welsh medium schools:

Due to the lack of Welsh medium vocational qualifications available, learners are opting into English medium schools or colleges instead if they know which vocation they wish to pursue.

- Workforce issues at secondary school level:

Welsh medium secondary schools are facing issues with recruiting specialist staff for several subject areas meaning the Welsh medium GCSE and A Level offer may not be on parr with neighbouring English medium schools. This is an issue being faced pan Wales as many practitioners are leaving the profession.

ASSURANCE / MITIGATION ACTION

- Falling birth rates across RCT:

The Local Authority's Education Data team recently met with Mudiad Meithrin to discuss this in more detail. This data needs to be used more to strategically plan Welsh medium provision across the County Borough based on areas where births are occurring.

- Transition data available on the numbers transitioning from early years settings into statutory education is not accurate:
  - o The Local Authority's Education Data team are working with Mudiad Meithin on a new 'Data Sharing Agreement' between the Local Authority and Welsh medium childcare and early years settings in order to gather details of children attending the settings so that these can be mapped across into primary education, ensuring we have official data on the numbers transitioning. This will be in place by September 2023.
  - o A meeting will be arranged for the new academic year between Flying Start colleagues, Childcare Development colleagues and Mudiad Meithrin to discuss further

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concerns around settings offering Welsh and English medium sessions to ensure the data being recorded moving forward is accurate.

- Retention of learners from Key Stage 4 to Key Stage 5 in Welsh medium schools:
  - o The Gyda'n Gilydd group are working with the WJEC to create Welsh medium Level 3 vocational qualifications.
  - o Coleg y Cymoedd to are working with Welsh medium secondary schools to create a Key Stage 5 collaborative offer. This will be an action on Year 2 of the work plan to ensure the developments around this are monitored closely.

- Workforce issues at secondary school level:
  - o Work with partners such as Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, Cardiff Metropolitan University and CSCJES to promote the benefits of teaching as a profession to encourage people to consider this as a career pathway.
  - o Promote the alternative routes into teaching available via the Open University Salaried Route whereby Welsh Government contributes towards the student teacher's salary and the ITE programme.

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Outcome 4

More learners study for assessed qualifications in Welsh (as a subject) and subjects through the medium of Welsh

PLASC Data

The data in the table that follows is derived from PLASC and outlines the total number of secondary school aged learners attending schools in RCT, split by Welsh and English medium for the previous five academic years up to and including 2022-2023. The percentages of learners receiving their education through the medium of Welsh and English has remained stable over the previous five academic years.

Table 4.1

Total Number of Secondary School Aged Learners Attending Secondary Schools Split by Welsh and English Medium Over the Previous Five Academic Years										
Category	**Academic Year**									
	2018-2019		**2019-2020**		**2020-2021**		**2021-2022**		**2022-2023**	
Welsh Medium Schools	3,058	19.4%	3,141	19.6%	3,197	19.3%	3,136	19%	3,121	19%
English Medium Schools	12,685	80.6%	12,868	80.4%	13,346	80.7%	13,365	81%	13,317	81%
Total No. All Schools	15,473		16,009		16,543		16,501		16,438	

The data in the table that follows is derived from PLASC and outlines the total number of year ten learners attending Welsh medium secondary schools for the previous five academic years, up to and including 2022-2023. The data demonstrates that the number of year ten learners attending Welsh medium secondary schools has steadily increased over the previous five academic years, with the most recent year showing the highest number of learners.

Table 4.2

Total Number of Year Ten Learners Attending Welsh Medium Secondary Schools Over the Previous Five Academic Years					
Year Group	**Academic Year**				
	2018-2019	**2019-2020**	**2020-2021**	**2021-2022**	**2022-2023**
Year Ten	496	513	517	533	539

The data in the table below, also derived from PLASC, outlines the total number of year ten learners attending English medium secondary schools for the previous five academic years, up to and including 2022-2023. The number of year ten learners in English medium schools was at its highest in 2020-

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2021 and has declined since then, however there is a slight increase this year when comparing with the previous year.

Table 4.3

Total Number of Year Ten Learners Attending English Medium Secondary Schools Over the Previous Five Academic Years					
Year Group	Academic Year				
	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Year Ten	2,105	2,251	2,303	2,232	2,284

The data in the table below is derived from PLASC and outlines surplus capacities in Welsh medium secondary and through schools in RCT for the previous four academic years, up to and including 2022-2023. The data demonstrates that the percentage of surplus capacities in Welsh medium secondary schools has increased to 27% during the last four years.

Table 4.4

Surplus Capacity in Welsh Medium Secondary and Through Schools for the Previous Four Academic Years				
Category	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Secondary and Through Schools	23.1%	21.%	26.6%	27%

Data on the Number of Learners Registered for GCSE Welsh

The data in the table that follows is derived from Welsh Government data and outlines the total percentage of year eleven learner entries for GCSEs in Welsh (first and second language) for the previous five academic years, up to and including the academic year 2021-2022. The data demonstrates a slight increase in the number of entries for Welsh Second Language GCSE however the entries for Welsh First Language has remained stable over this period of time.

Table 4.5

Total Percentage of Year Eleven Learner Entries for GCSEs in Welsh (First and Second Language) Over the Previous Five Academic Years					
Category	Academic Year				
	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Welsh (First Language)	17%	17%	18%	18.4%	18.2%
Welsh (Second Language)	45%	59%	63%	62.1%	64.2%

The data in the table that follows is derived from Welsh Government data and outlines the total percentage of year twelve and thirteen learner entries for AS and A Level Welsh (first and second language) for the previous five academic years, up to and including 2021-2022. During the most recent

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academic year, the number of learner entries has decreased slightly when comparing to the previous four years.

Table 4.6

Total Percentage of Year Twelve and Thirteen Learner Entries for AS and A Level in Welsh (First and Second Language) Over the Previous Five Academic Years					
	Academic Year				
Category	**2017-2018**	**2018-2019**	**2019-2020**	**2020-2021**	**2021-2022**
Welsh (First and Second Language)	4.2%	3.7%	3.5%	3.7%	3.1%

Coleg y Cymoedd Data

The data in the table below is provided by Coleg y Cymoedd and demonstrates the number of learners at the college that completed elements of their studies through the medium of Welsh for the academic year 2021-2022. This is the most recent data available, the data for the current academic year will be released in January 2024. An explanation of the codes is provided below.

Table 4.7

Number of Learners Completing Bilingual Learning at Coleg y Cymoedd	
Code	**2021-2022**
B1	13
B3	43
C1	592
Total	**648**

Code

E1	Learning and assessment completed in English only.
B3	A small amount of Welsh medium learning completed in Welsh, limited to verbal communication or a minor part of the learning activity, with the assessment being completed in English only. This can be used to record situations where some Welsh is used during learning, however minimum use of incidental Welsh is not sufficient for it to be recorded. There needs to be Welsh language interaction between the assessor/lecturer/teacher and learner for it to be a meaningful use of the language.
B2	A significant amount of Welsh medium learning (both verbal and written) used in many, but not all parts, of the learning activity. Assessment completed mainly in English, but there may be some elements of Welsh.
B1	Learning completed in a bilingual context with at least 50% of the available assessments within the learning activity being completed through the medium of Welsh. The outcome may be achieved using any appropriate teaching methodology.
C1	Learning completed in a Welsh medium context with all the available assessments within the learning activity being completed through the medium of Welsh.

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E-sgol Data

At present, there is only 1 Welsh medium secondary school in RCT providing further opportunities to learners through the E-sgol programme. Ysgol Llanhari have a partnership with YG Llangynwyd which is located in Bridgend County Borough. Although this school is in a neighbouring county, this is the closest Welsh medium secondary school to Ysgol Llanhari geographically.

The data in the table below has been provided by E-sgol and outlines the courses being delivered through the Llanhari/Llangynwyd partnership for the academic year 2022-2023. The data contains the number of learners on each course split by year group however, these figures also include learners accessing the programme from YG Llangynwyd so are not specific to RCT learners only. The data shows that there are 10 courses being delivered this academic year with 48 year 12 learners and 15 year 13 learners accessing learning through the E-sgol programme.

Table 4.8

Courses Offered and Numbers on Courses for the Ysgol Llanhari/ Ysgol Llangynwyd E-sgol Partnership		
Subject	**Year 12**	**Year 13**
Sociology	9	1
Health and Social Care	10	5
Physical Education	4	0
Music	1	0
Sports	1	4
Product Design	2	0
Physics	9	1
Protective Services	4	3
Digital Technology	8	0
Applied ICT	0	1
Total	**48**	**15**

OUTCOME SUMMARY

Increasing the Number of Welsh Medium Qualifications Available

A key focus of Outcome 4 of the WESP is to maintain and broaden the GCSE, AS and A Level provision available through the medium of Welsh. CSCJES have been working closely with the Gyda'n Gilydd group and WJEC to address the disparity in the number of accessible qualifications available, especially vocational qualifications through the medium of Welsh. Funding has been utilised for the creation of more accessible qualifications, mainly developing Level 2 and 3 Welsh medium vocational qualifications. CSCJES has provided Gyda'n Gilydd with £10,000 finding in 2021-2022 and an additional £10,000 in 2022-2023 to work alongside WJEC to develop Welsh medium Level 3 vocational qualifications. Qualifications are currently being developed for Business, Tourism, Public Services and Sports. The group continues to work with the WJEC on this project and strong progress is being made.

Welsh medium secondary schools have been working Coleg y Cymoedd to explore opportunities for collaborative working between the schools and the college to ensure a more extensive Welsh medium curriculum is available for Key Stage 5 learners. Coleg y Cymoedd Senior Leadership team and the

Recruitment and Progression Manager have met with representatives from YG Rhydywaun, Ysgol Garth Olwg and Ysgol Llanhari to discuss 14-16 pathways with the aim of aiding retention of learners into Welsh medium sixth form education. Discussions went well and the college are now putting together a new 14-16 pathways Key Stage 5 collaborative offer. This will be monitored during the next academic year to ensure the conversations around this continue.

Coleg y Cymoedd are also developing Welsh medium and bilingual provision in vocational areas in line with the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol 'Further Education and Apprenticeship Welsh Medium Action Plan.' The college has employed Welsh language facilitators in the areas of Childcare, Health and Social Care and Public Services are currently recruiting in the areas of Creative Industries and Business. The Welsh language facilitators in these priority areas are working directly with tutors and learners to develop bilingual provision. Coleg y Cymoedd are continuing to work closely with awarding bodies to ensure learners are able to submit work in Welsh.

Tools and resources developed by Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol and Sgiliau Iaith are used to encourage the use of Welsh within the college classroom. Welsh medium and bilingual opportunities (both in the classroom and extracurricular) are being widely advertised through college brochures, 'Welsh at Coleg y Cymoedd' booklets, internal staff and student portals, social media campaigns and open events and fairs.

Welsh Medium Learning Pathways

In our WESP, we included our aims to further develop learning pathways for 14 to 19 year old learners to provide a wider range of options for learners. The Local Authority's Gatsby Benchmark Manager is a member of the Outcome 4 sub-group and has been proactive in discussions around developing the Gatsby Benchmark Programme and Green Light Provision in our Welsh medium secondary schools. Amendments have been made to the Benchmark framework to support the development of further learning pathways in Welsh medium schools, to include:

- Added to Benchmark 4 – "With an emphasis on all subject teachers to emphasise on the importance of succeeding in Welsh".

- Added to Benchmark 7 "Encounters with Further and Higher Education" – "Pupils understand and have experience of routes that transition or move into further and higher education through the medium of Welsh".

The Gatsby Benchmark Manager has made links with Sian Lloyd Morgan (senior lecturer at Cardiff University with responsibility for Welsh Language pathways) to develop further understandings of what is available to share with career leads and Headteachers. This will be a focus for Year 2 of the WESP.

Green Light Provision is now being delivered in all Welsh medium secondary and through schools, linking careers using the Welsh language and how they can be achieved through Welsh qualifications. A Welsh speaking member of staff is now available to conduct the advice and guidance sessions and Green Light support through the medium of Welsh.

A pilot project entitled 'Ysbrydoli Fi/Inspire Me' has taken place during this academic year in both Welsh and English medium secondary schools in RCT. The project invites inspirational speakers from a range of career backgrounds to speak to learners from all year groups on their career journeys and how the ability to communicate in Welsh has supported their career aspirations. A third pilot school, an English medium through school, will run the 'Ysbrydoli Fi' programme in January 2024 focusing on career pathways through and using the Welsh language.

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E-sgol Provision in RCT

There is currently only 1 school in RCT engaging with the E-sgol provision to provide learners with a wider range of subjects through the medium of Welsh. Following a visit to Ysgol Llanhari by the E-sgol team whereby the promoted the opportunities available, the school have taken advantage of the programme and have partnered with YG Llangynwyd, located in Bridgend County Borough, for the delivery of the programme. E-sgol have also presented to the Headteachers who are members of the Gyda'n Gilydd group however to date only Ysgol Llanhari have engaged with the programme. The data in the table above (Table 4.8) demonstrates the range of subjects being accessed by learners at Ysgol Llanhari through the E-sgol programme, providing a wider offer of Welsh medium qualifications to aid retention of learners at the school.

E-sgol held a conference event on the 3rd of July to promote the programme to schools across the region. The conference provided schools with an opportunity to further understand what is available through E-sgol, looking at successful case studies and networking with other schools. The conference was widely advertised with secondary schools in RCT via CSCJES and the Local Authority's Education team communication channels as well as being promoted during WESP steering group and sub-group meetings. A total of 39 attendees across the region attending the conference, however E-sgol have confirmed that no further schools have shown interest as of yet. We will continue to work with CSCJES and Welsh medium secondary schools in RCT to promote the support available via the E-sgol programme to widen their Welsh medium qualification offer.

Promoting Welsh as a Subject and Subjects Through the Medium of Welsh

CSCJES prepared a document linking through to a collection of resources produced by Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol that support schools to emphasise and promote the benefits of studying Welsh as a subject. The resources encourage learners to continue to study Welsh as an AS/A Level subject and as a university degree. The collection contains various materials such as video clips and links to external websites. The link to these resources: https://www.porth.ac.uk/en/collection/pam-astudio-r-gymraeg-fel-pwnc

The document contained a link to the 'Choose Lefel A Cymraeg' campaign and resources. This campaign is funded by Welsh Government and aims to encourage more young learners to study Welsh as an A Level by providing promotional assets to raise awareness around the endless benefits the language has on academic, cultural and working life. The link to the campaign and resources: https://www.porth.ac.uk/en/collection/dewisa-lefel-a-cymraeg-ymgyrch-ac-adnoddau

The document also linked through to the E-sgol website which outlines its aims to expand opportunities for post-14 and post-16 learners to study courses that would otherwise not be available to them. This document has been shared widely with both Welsh and English medium secondary schools in RCT via CSCJES and the Local Authority's Education team communication channels.

In order to ensure parents/carers are informed of the opportunities available, changes have been made to the Local Authority's corporate website to include a section on post-16 provision for learners in RCT. The changes made were the first step in creating a post-16 provision section of the website. During Year 2 of the WESP, further changes will be made to the website to develop this further along with schools' individual websites to ensure the post-16 Welsh medium offer is available for parents/carers to see, ensuring the opportunities which are available are widely promoted.

CSCJES are also looking into funding a group to produce marketing resources aimed at increasing the number of learners studying Welsh as a subject, and subjects through the medium of Welsh. CSCJES have had discussions with Welsh Government around this and it was highlighted that the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol have produced a wide range of resources which have now been shared directly with schools via CSCJES communication channels and via their social media platforms.

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CSCJES have informed schools of the 2023-2024 'Welsh in Education Grant' which is available from Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol. This grant is aimed at promoting Welsh as a subject with the aim of increasing the number of learners studying Welsh at A Level. CSCJES are awaiting uptake data for RCT from Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol: Welsh in Education Grant - Welsh in Education Fund 2022/23

The benefits of studying Welsh as a subject are also being promoted in our English medium schools. Porth Community School, which is an English medium through school, faced challenges at the beginning of this academic year as they were not able to recruit a Welsh medium teacher to deliver Welsh lessons at the school. This had an impact on the opportunities available to offer Welsh as subject to the older learners as they did not have a specialist teacher who could deliver these lessons. In recent months, the school have successfully recruited a Welsh teacher who has already implemented positive changes at the school with regards to changing attitudes towards the Welsh language.

A 'Criw Cymraeg' has been established for Years 5, 6 and 7 which allows learners to vote for staff who have used incidental Welsh in lessons and throughout the school. The aim of this initiative is to raise awareness and use of incidental Welsh across the school in an engaging and impactful way. The 'Criw Cymraeg' learners have also created posters for the school based on bilingualism and the advantages of speaking and studying Welsh and held a competition where learners had to create a Welsh welcome sign to be placed in reception areas. These activities form part of a learner centred initiative where the school are shifting the focus from Welsh being imposed by teachers, to learners having direct ownership of how Welsh can become an increasingly relevant part of the everyday culture of school. Plans are already in place for activities for the next academic year which include:

- Language teachers choosing a language ambassador at the end of each half term for a breaktime treat.
- Promoting and celebrating language focused cultural events – European day of languages, Santes Dwynwen etc.
- The school Eisteddfod will increase in prominence and scope to involve a variety of acts and skills in collaboration with other staff and subject areas.
- A trip to Llangrannog currently being planned with the Urdd for Year 6 and 7 learners for March 2024.

Courses Offered and Uptake Through the Medium of Welsh

The Local Authority's 14-19 Strategy Officer works closely with CSCJES and local partnerships to monitor the number of courses offered and the uptake through the medium of Welsh, as required by Section 116B (4) of the Education Act 2022.

The data below shows the number of courses offered through the medium of Welsh to year 10 and year 11 learners in RCT. This data relates to courses being delivered fully through Welsh, however it's important to note that there are a small number of no more than 18 learners in this age category who are completing the course bilingually. The number of courses being offered through the medium of Welsh at post-14 qualification level has remained fairly consistent over the previous four years. It's positive to see that the number of learners undertaking courses through the medium of Welsh at post-14 qualification level has steadily increased over this time period.

Table 4.8

Post-14 Welsh Medium Offer – Number of Courses and Number of Learners				
Year	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Number of Courses Offered Through the Medium of Welsh	32	31	31	33
Number of learners taking courses through the medium of Welsh	1,002	1,024	1,038	1,046

The data below shows the number of courses offered through the medium of Welsh to year 12 and year 13 learners in RCT. This data relates to courses being delivered fully through Welsh, however as mentioned above, there are a small number of no more than 18 learners in this age category who are completing the course bilingually. The number of courses offered through the medium of Welsh at post-16 qualification level is consistent with the post-14 offer in terms of the number of courses being offered is fairly consistent over the previous four academic years. However, the number of learners undertaking courses through the medium of Welsh at post-16 level has declined since the academic year 2020-2021. Although there is an increase in the number of learners during 2022-2023, this is still a decrease on the numbers undertaking courses prior to 2020-2021.

Table 4.9

Post-16 Welsh Medium Offer – Number of Courses and Number of Learners				
Year	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Number of Courses Offered Through the Medium of Welsh	33	33	32	34
Number of learners taking courses through the medium of Welsh	474	484	449	465

The data demonstrates the challenges currently being faced with the retention of learners in Welsh medium education at post-16 level as the numbers undertaking courses through the medium of Welsh at this level have more than halved during each academic year when comparing with the numbers undertaking courses at post-14 qualification level. The Local Authority will continue to work with partners and schools in RCT to develop Welsh medium vocational qualifications and to further promote the qualifications available through the medium of Welsh with the aim of increasing the numbers as we progress through the ten year plan.

Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme
We continue to deliver investment in Welsh medium primary education through the Band B Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme. At the beginning of this academic year, we delivered an extension to YG Rhydywaun to increase capacity at the school. The brand new block on the school site opened to learners from September 2022 and created an additional 187 learner places at the school.

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A design team is currently being assembled to look at development options to deliver a modern, innovative teaching and learning environment at YG Cwm Rhondda. Proposals are currently in their earliest stages, these will be developed further during year 2 of the WESP in collaboration with the school, and officers will be working to secure funding via the Welsh Government's Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme.

Outcome 4 Sub-Group

A sub-group has been established to focus solely on each outcome of the WESP. The sub-groups provide an effective focus for the Local Authority in partnership with external groups and organisations. The sub-group have met on a termly basis to review the actions listed on the Outcome 4 Annual Work Plan and provide updates on any progress made and to discuss next steps for actions, where appropriate. The establishment of this sup-group has been successful in creating constructive working relationships between the Local Authority, CSCJES, Welsh medium secondary schools and Coleg y Cymoedd who are all working towards the same goal of broadening and maintaining learning opportunities through the medium of Welsh. The sub-group meetings have provided opportunities to collaborate and share ideas amongst different school cluster groups.

IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

We have a dedicated group focussing solely on this outcome. The Head of Achievement and Wellbeing leads this sub-group and membership includes internal officers, representation from Welsh medium secondary schools, local college and CSCJES.

The initial sub-group meetings at the beginning of this academic year focussed on developing the work plan which details the overarching targets, the actions and the key activities required to achieve the targets. The Outcome 4 Sub-group meets on a termly basis to review the targets and actions listed on the work plan to provide an opportunity for members to provide updates on any progress made, where appropriate, and to identify ways to move forward with certain actions. The sub-group lead will review end dates of actions on the work plan to ensure the group remains on targets and in situations where the end date has surpassed, questions will be asked as to why and follow on steps agreed upon to ensure we move forward and don't miss any targets. Following each meeting, minutes of the meeting are shared with members of the sub-group and the 'Progress/Evaluation' column on the work plan is updated with any comments made during the meeting.

OUTCOME LEVEL RISKS

- Workforce issues at secondary school level:

Welsh medium secondary schools are facing issues with recruiting specialist staff for a number of subject areas meaning the Welsh medium GCSE and A Level offer may not be on parr with neighbouring English medium schools. This is an issue being faced pan Wales as many practitioners are leaving the profession.

- Retention of Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 learners in Welsh medium schools:

Due to the lack of Welsh medium vocational qualifications available, learners are opting into English medium schools or colleges instead if they know which vocation they wish to pursue.

- Funding schemes ending:

The Local Authority received funding to roll out the Green Light Provision in Welsh medium schools which has proven to be successful, however this funding will end eventually and there's no confirmation of further funding as of yet.

- New qualifications:

Certain qualifications have not been renewed which runs the risk of continuum of learning for some learners who may opt to an English medium school or college to carry out the qualification.

ASSURANCE / MITIGATION ACTION

- Workforce issues at secondary school level:
  - o Work with partners such as Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, Cardiff Metropolitan University and CSCJES to promote the benefits of teaching as a profession to encourage people to consider this as a career pathway.
  - o Promote the alternative routes into teaching available via the Open University Salaried Route whereby Welsh Government contributes towards the student teacher's salary and the ITE programme.

- Retention of Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 learners in Welsh medium schools:
  - o The Gyda'n Gilydd group are working with the WJEC to create Welsh medium Level 3 vocational qualifications.
  - o Coleg y Cymoedd to are working with Welsh medium secondary schools to create a Key Stage 5 collaborative offer. This will be an action on Year 2 of the work plan to ensure the developments around this are monitored closely.

- Funding schemes ending:

We hope that further funding will come available once this funding scheme ends as the roll out of the provision in Welsh medium schools has proven to be a success.

- New qualifications:

We are awaiting decisions and consultations from Welsh Government and Qualification Wales regarding this issue.

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Outcome 5

More opportunities for learners to use Welsh in different contexts in school

KEY ANNUAL DATA

Siarter Iaith Cymraeg Campus Data

The data in the table below is provided by CSCJES and demonstrates the baseline data of the number of Welsh medium primary schools that had received the Siarter Iaith gold, silver and bronze awards as of September 2022, against the most recent data. Since the beginning of this academic year, 1 additional school has received the silver and 3 additional schools have received the gold.

Table 5.1

Welsh Medium Primary Schools – Siarter Iaith		
	September 2022	**July 2023**
Bronze	17	17
Silver	12	13
Gold	2	5

The data in the table below is provided by CSCJES and demonstrates the baseline data of the number of Welsh medium secondary schools that had received the Siarter Iaith gold, silver and bronze awards as of September 2022, against the most recent data. Since the beginning of this academic year, 1 additional school has received the bronze award.

Table 5.2

Welsh Medium Secondary Schools – Siarter Iaith		
	September 2022	**July 2023**
Bronze	1	2
Silver	1	1
Gold	0	0

The data in the table below is provided by CSCJES and demonstrates the baseline data of the number of English medium primary schools that had received the Cymraeg Campus gold, silver and bronze awards as of September 2022, against the most recent data. Since the beginning of this academic year, 8 additional schools have achieved the bronze award, 10 schools have achieved the silver award and 2 schools have achieved the gold award.

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Table 5.3

English Medium Primary Schools – Cymraeg Campus		
	September 2022	**July 2023**
Bronze	32	40
Silver	0	10
Gold	0	2

The data in the table below is provided by CSCJES and demonstrates the baseline data of the number of English medium secondary schools that had received the Cymraeg Campus gold, silver and bronze awards as of September 2022, against the most recent data. Since the beginning of this academic year, 4 additional schools have received the bronze award.

Table 5.4

English Medium Secondary Schools – Cymraeg Campus		
	September 2022	**July 2023**
Bronze	1	5
Silver	0	0
Gold	0	0

During the first year of the WESP, the Siarter Iaith Cymraeg Campus provision was extended to include special schools and units in RCT. CSCJES Improvement Partners have worked with schools and units to support the roll out of the programme. The data in the table below demonstrates the baseline data of the number of special schools/units that had received the Cymraeg Campus gold, silver and bronze awards as of September 2022, against the most recent data. Since the beginning of this academic year, 3 schools have received the bronze award.

Table 5.5

English Medium Special Schools/Units – Cymraeg Campus		
	September 2022	**July 2023**
Bronze	0	3
Silver	0	0
Gold	0	0

There are 17 Welsh medium primary schools in RCT. All Welsh medium primary schools in RCT have now engaged with the Siarter Iaith programme and all have received the bronze award. There are 4 Welsh medium secondary schools in RCT, all of which have now engaged with the Siarter Iaith programme.

There are a total of 82 English medium primary schools in RCT. Of these 82 schools, there are 6 English medium primary schools yet to engage with provision. There are 13 English medium secondary/although schools in RCT. Of these 13 schools, 4 are yet to engage with provision.

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The schools yet to engage were invited to an 'Introduction to Siarter Iaith Cymraeg Campus' session hosted by CSCJES in the spring term, whereby the schools were encouraged to engage with the programme. These schools will be targeted again during the 2023-2024 academic year.

There are 6 special schools/units in RCT. Of the 6 settings, only 1 has yet to engage. CSCJES Improvement Partners are continuing to work closely with the relevant officers to support engagement and roll out of provision.

OUTCOME SUMMARY

Youth Services

In November 2022, the Youth Engagement and Participation Service (YEPS) launched its 'Your Voice/Eich Llais' survey to capture the views of young people aged 11 – 25. Young people were given the opportunity to complete a series of interactive questions asked on a range of thematic areas using an online survey platform. Almost 5,000 people responded to the survey across schools, colleges, youth clubs and other community settings across the Local Authority. Part of the survey explored respondents' use of the Welsh language and asked the question: *Would you welcome more opportunities to learn, or use, the Welsh language outside of school/in you free time in any of these places?* The options of places included: online, libraries, art clubs, sports clubs, during school holidays, youth clubs, after school clubs.

The outcome of this survey shows that respondents would like more opportunities to learn and use the language online, at sport clubs and at after school clubs. This data will be used by YEPS to inform future planning of Welsh medium opportunities in RCT and to improve the way YEPS and partner organisations deliver services for young people in the area.

The YEPS team, Menter Iaith and the Urdd have met regularly throughout this academic year to co-produce opportunities for learners to use Welsh in different contexts. YEPS received funding via the Youth Support Grant to support a range of activities which was commissioned out to the Urdd and Menter Iaith. The additional funding remaining has been used to increase the number of trips YEPS are able to run which also includes mixed trips to develop conversations in Welsh with learners from English medium schools. These trips will run throughout the school summer holidays.

Partnership Working

The Urdd and Menter Iaith have been working in partnership with Welsh medium secondary schools in RCT to establish Welsh language youth forums in each school. During Year 2 of the WESP, the Urdd and Menter Iaith will build relationships with English medium schools in RCT in order to establish Welsh language forums if there's funding remaining. The Urdd and Menter Iaith have also been working with Coleg y Cymoedd's Bilingual Development Officer to establish Welsh language youth forums at the college which has now been done. The officer has been building a bank of Welsh speakers at the college who are now members of the forum.

The college's Bilingual Development Officer is currently working with the Welsh Language team of each college campus in RCT to create a 'Cwtsh Cymraeg' on each campus. This will be a Welsh language area with a visual focal point for Welsh related activities for learners attending Coleg y Cymoedd campuses. During Year 2 of the WESP, the officer will be recruiting 3 Welsh Language Learner Ambassadors to support with the promotion of Welsh related activities. The college continue to ensure a range of activities and experiences are provided for learners attending the college, these activities include:

- Regular challenges related to the Welsh language for staff and learners on each campus.
- Social activities for Welsh speaking learners.

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- Sessions for learners wanting to learn basic level of Welsh.

In our WESP, we committed to strengthening links between the Local Authority and the Urdd to provide learners with a wide range of activities to use the Welsh language in different contexts. The Local Authority's Leisure Services team have been working with the Urdd to deliver sport activities for Welsh medium schools in RCT. Leisure Services now have a Service Level Agreement in place with the Urdd to deliver sporting sessions through the medium of Welsh. Swimming lessons through the medium of Welsh are currently being delivered on a weekly basis every Monday at Llantrisant Leisure Centre and every Tuesday at Rhondda Sports Centre. There are currently over 130 children per week undertaking their swimming lessons through the medium of Welsh at these centres and lessons will also be starting at Aberdare Sobell Leisure Centre soon.

The Urdd host a range of multi-sport activities through the medium of Welsh at the following schools:
- YGG Bodringallt
- YGG Bronllwyn
- YGG Castellau
- Dolau Primary School (dual language)
- Ysgol Garth Olwg
- Ysgol Llanhari
- YGG Llwyncelyn
- YGG Llyn y Forwyn
- YGG Pont Sion Norton
- YGG Tonyrefail
- YGG Ynyswen

The Urdd offer support to every Welsh medium school in RCT to run provision such as Dinnertime Club and School Club. The schools listed below are currently working with the Urdd to deliver this type of provision. The Urdd are prioritising engaging with all Welsh medium schools during the next academic year in order to provide further Welsh medium opportunities across RCT.

List of schools currently engaged with the Urdd:
- YGG Bodringallt
- YGG Bronllwyn
- YGG Castellau
- Dolau Primary School (dual language)
- YGG Evan James
- Ysgol Garth Olwg
- Gwauncelyn Primary (English medium)
- Heol Y Celyn Primary (dual language)
- Ysgol Llanhari
- YGGG Llantrisant
- YGG Llwyncelyn
- YGG Llyn y Forwyn
- YGG Pont Sion Norton
- YGG Tonyrefail
- Tŷ Coch (Special School/Learning Support)
- YGG Ynyswen

The Urdd also provide sport activities outside of the classroom through the delivery of Welsh medium community clubs across RCT. The data in the table below has been provided by the

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Urdd and demonstrates the type of classes available and the number of children attending these sessions per week:

Table 5.6

Sport Activity	Numbers Attending
Gymnasteg Garth Olwg	19
Gymnasteg Canolfan Hamdden Rhondda	31
Gymnasteg Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda	16
Nofio Llantrisant	83
Nofio Rhondda	55
Pel-rwyd #FelMerch	6
Rygbi Cwm Rhondda	8
Tenis Taffs Well	10

Evaluation of Siarter Iaith Cymraeg Campus

Formal evaluation of the Siarter Iaith Cymraeg Campus programme has not been conducted during year 1 of the WESP. The data available above shows high levels of engagement with the provision demonstrating that all sectors of education are accessing further opportunities to use Welsh in different contexts. A number of English medium primary schools in RCT were contacted to gather information on what the schools are doing to promote the use of the Welsh language. From the responses received, it's evident that the Siarter Iaith Cymraeg Campus programme is having a positive impact on the increasing use of Welsh in English medium schools. Some of the common themes throughout the responses was the introduction of the Helpwr Heddiw/Helpwr y Dydd initiative and the establishment of Criw Cymraeg. The Helpwr Heddiw initiative is being used across all schools that responded, recognising learners use of Welsh using appropriate sentence patterns for their age. Each school has a Criw Cymraeg focussing on developing and promoting the use of Welsh throughout the school. Criw Cymraeg activities across English medium schools include Welsh playground games, 'Siaradwyr Gymraeg yr Wythnos' certificates for learners who are chosen for their use of Welsh throughout the week and Cegin Cyw at lunchtimes whereby children ask for meals in Welsh. Some of the schools have linked in with Welsh medium schools in RCT to develop Criw Cymraeg activities and in some areas of the county, learners from these schools have attended English medium schools to support learners with the development and use of their Welsh language skills. All schools that responded provide weekly Welsh assemblies introducing the 'word', 'phrase' and 'question' of the week and focusing on different elements of Welsh language, culture and heritage. During year 2 of the WESP, we will evaluate the impact of the programme across all schools in RCT.

Further Opportunities to use Welsh Outside of the Classroom

The Local Authority's Musical Services team have been identifying different ways to promote bilingual opportunities through using musical services. Since the beginning of this academic year, they've had an increase in the number of harp lessons being provided in both Welsh and English medium schools and are currently looking into the feasibility of delivering jazz sessions through the medium of Welsh outside of the school day. Musical Services are engaging with both Welsh and English medium schools to encourage learners who show an aptitude towards playing instruments to take part in the Urdd Eisteddfod and are also looking into establishing a Welsh folk group with the possibility of a performance at the National Eisteddfod which is being held in RCT in 2024.

The Local Authority's Leisure Services have continued to work closely with partners to develop opportunities to introduce the Welsh language into leisure sessions. Menter Iaith have supported

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Leisure Services to develop and deliver a bilingual training programme for physical activity. Through partnership working, they have delivered workshops to staff on how the Welsh language can be introduced into traditionally English sporting activities. The programme includes consultation, mentoring, development of new resources and further development of workshops for future rollout. This initiative is in its early stages and will be further developed during Year 2 of the WESP.

Leisure Services have also engaged with community sporting groups across RCT to encourage an uptake in Welsh language community clubs for children. We are pleased to report that Leisure Services have successfully established the first fully Welsh leisure club in RCT and are continuing to work closely with 'Dregiau Dar Football Club' to develop Welsh medium training sessions. The club are developing an under 10s mixed section with 5 volunteers and coaches supporting this. The club have received Sport RCT Accreditation and have an application pending with Sport Wales for the Be Active Wales Fund. As this is the first club of its type in RCT, a case study will be completed in due course with the aim of promoting this wider to encourage more clubs to develop Welsh medium provision.

The Local Authority's Welsh Language Services have been identifying ways in which non-teaching, education based staff can train or upskill themselves so that they can engage with learners through the medium of Welsh. The first area being targeted for support is the Local Authority's Catering Services. The Welsh Language Services team have liaised with Catering Services to identify practical ways of rolling out Welsh lessons to all school-based catering staff. Several challenges were faced with this due to catering staff working shorter hours and the difficulty of finding cover for staff to be released for Welsh lessons. The team have been working closely with the Local Authority's ICT department and have successfully arranged for all school kitchens to be distributed with dedicated tablets. Work is ongoing to explore suitable applications for unique log on, so that the tables can be shared amongst colleagues for the lessons. The Local Authority tutor who will be delivering these lessons has prepared bilingual materials to provide to Catering Services to support them with their Welsh language skills.

The Local Authority's Arts, Culture and Library Services team have been exploring options to develop further opportunities for learners to use Welsh in different contexts in community settings. An issue they're currently facing is a lack of providers available who are able to deliver sessions through the medium of Welsh. The team have been promoting the Arts Council of Wales' initiatives to upskill the cultural sector to create more providers who are able to deliver sessions through the medium of Welsh. The Level 1 Welsh e-module which is available to Local Authority employees is being looked into in order to utilise the training available and encourage the freelance artists and organisations that the team work closely with, to undertake the module so that they have an introduction to the Welsh language. Work around these actions are ongoing and will carry on into Year 2 of the WESP.

The National Eisteddfod is being held in RCT in 2024. The Local Authority's Eisteddfod Project team have created a marketing campaign which is currently being implemented in partnership with the National Eisteddfod team. The Eisteddfod launch event was held in the spring term where performers, artists and community groups came together to create a taster session. Further community meetings have been held to engage with the general public. The Local Authority's Eisteddfod team will be consulting with schools in RCT in September 2023 for their input to help shape the Eisteddfod's own school strategy. Promotion and marketing of the National Eisteddfod will be a priority action for Year 2 of the WESP, ensuring all schools across RCT are involved with the activities despite their language category.

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Outcome 5 Sub-Group

A sub-group has been established to focus solely on each outcome of the WESP. The sub-groups provide an effective focus for the Local Authority in partnership with external groups and organisations. The sub-group have met virtually on a termly basis to review the actions listed on the Outcome 5 Annual Work Plan and provide updates on any progress made and to discuss next steps for actions, where appropriate. Strong working relationships have been established between partners who are members of the Outcome 5 sub-group which has enabled information, opportunities and best practices to be shared amongst partners.

IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

We have a dedicated group focussing solely on this outcome. The Head of Attendance and Wellbeing leads this sub-group and membership includes internal representation from Youth Services, Welsh Language Services, Arts and Culture Services along with external representation from partners to include Menter Iaith, Urdd, CSCJES and Coleg y Cymoedd.

The initial sub-group meetings at the beginning of this academic year focussed on developing the work plan which details the overarching targets, the actions and the key activities required to achieve the targets. The Outcome 5 Sub-group meets on a termly basis to review the targets and actions listed on the work plan to provide an opportunity for members to provide updates on any progress made, where appropriate, and to identify ways to move forward with certain actions. These meetings have been held virtually and have had good attendance at each meeting. Many important points have been raised and actioned accordingly. The sub-group lead will review end dates of actions on the work plan to ensure the group remains on targets and in situations where the end date has surpassed, questions will be asked as to why and follow on steps agreed upon to ensure we move forward and don't miss any targets. Following each meeting, minutes of the meeting are shared with members of the sub-group and the 'Progress/Evaluation' column on the work plan is updated with any comments made during the meeting.

OUTCOME LEVEL RISKS

- Lack of qualified Welsh medium staff available to deliver Youth services:

YEPS and partner organisations such as Menter Iaith and the Urdd are facing challenges with recruiting qualified Welsh medium staff to support their services. Members of the sub-group have raised that funding is an issue, as the English medium positions typically offer a higher pay and are therefore more desirable.

- Arts, Culture and Library Services teams initiatives to upskill the cultural sector:

These initiatives are being introduced to create more providers who are able to deliver sessions through the medium of Welsh but are reliant on freelance artists and organisations taking up the offer of Level 1 Welsh e-modules which they may not choose to do. Arts Council Wales information is currently being awaited and this information will impact the likelihood of this target.

- Indicative funding:

The funding received via the Youth Support Grant is indicative and usually runs per annum. This poses a risk as it doesn't provide job security for staff and the quality of candidates may be compromised when only offering time-limited posts due to funding.

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- Schools yet to engage with Siarter Iaith Cymraeg Campus provision:

There are a group of schools who have yet to engage and are reluctant to do so.

- Action short of strike in schools:

This has created some challenges in some school settings for CSCJES Improvement Partners.

- Catering Services upskilling:

Current difficulties and challenges in staff accessing Welsh lessons due to their shorter working hours and the ability to find cover during their working hours for release.

ASSURANCE / MITIGATION ACTION

- Lack of qualified Welsh medium staff available to deliver Youth services:

Partners such as Menter Iaith, YEPS, Coleg y Cymoedd are working collaboratively to try to address the challenges faced with recruitment.

- Arts, Culture and Library Services teams initiatives to upskill the cultural sector:

Arts Council Wales information is currently being awaited and this information will impact the likelihood of this target being achieved.

- Indicative funding:

Partners are sharing resources where possible however this is not fixing the issues. Consider funding streams that last longer than a year to aid retention of staff in these types of positions.

- Schools yet to engage with Siarter Iaith Cymraeg Campus provision:

CSCJES are targeting these specific schools during the next academic year to get them onboard following attempts this year via the 'Introduction to Siarter Iaith Cymraeg Campus' sessions.

- Action short of strike in schools:

The impact of ASOS on developments will continue to be monitored.

- Catering Services upskilling:

Work ongoing to find practical ways to introduce sessions for these staff without financial implications that the Local Authority cannot commit to.

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Outcome 6

An increase in the provision of Welsh-medium education for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) in accordance with the duties imposed by the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018

KEY ANNUAL DATA

PLASC Data

The data in the table that follows is derived from PLASC and demonstrates the number and percentage of learners with ALN in English medium schools in RCT for the previous five academic years, up to and including the academic year 2022-2023. The data demonstrates a decrease in the number of learners with ALN in English medium education between the academic years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. The percentage of learners for this academic year has increased slightly, however still remains significantly lower than previous years.

Table 6.1

Number and Percentage of Learners in English Medium Education with ALN										
Academic Year										
Year	2018-2019		2019-2020		2020-2021		2021-2022		2022-2023	
Total No. with ALN	7,494	24.3%	6,283	20.3%	5,310	17%	1,508	4.87%	1,926	6.28%

The data in the table that follows is derived from PLASC and demonstrates the number and percentage of learners with ALN in Welsh medium schools across the RCT for the previous five academic years, up to and including the academic year 2022-2023. The data demonstrates the same trend within both Welsh and English medium education whereby the percentage of learners with ALN in Welsh medium education has decreased between the academic years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. The percentage of learners for this academic year has increased slightly, however still remains significantly lower than previous years.

Table 6.2

Number and Percentage of Learners in Welsh Medium Education with ALN										
Academic Year										
Year	2018-2019		2019-2020		2020-2021		2021-2022		2022-2023	
Total No. with ALN	1,478	20.17%	1,367	18.57%	1,090	14.83%	200	2.77%	256	3.58%

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OUTCOME SUMMARY

The Sufficiency of Welsh Medium Additional Learning Provision in our Locality

In line with the duties placed upon us section 63 of the Additional Learning Needs Act and the Education Tribunal (Wales) 2018 Act, the Local Authority's Access and Inclusion team have carried out a review of the additional learning provision currently available in Welsh medium early years settings in RCT. To complete these reviews, the team engaged with 15 Welsh medium registered education providers and asked for surveys to be completed. Out of the 15 settings, 13 settings engaged with the survey. The surveys demonstrated the following strengths:

- 100% of settings have a designated ALNCo.
- 12/13 settings have an agreed graduated response with clear areas of good practice in relation to multi-agency collaboration, use of assessment data and PCP.

The barriers reported by settings were similar across all responses received:

- Lack of available resources in Welsh.
- Recruiting Welsh speaking staff.
- Limited Welsh language abilities of parents/carers to support at home.

Of the 13 settings which engaged with the survey, 12 agreed that support available to them was good from a range of professionals. However, the support provided to settings is delivered predominantly by non-Welsh speaking specialist staff within ALN services.

Potential areas for development:

- Review service delivery within education ALN services with the aim of increasing the Welsh medium specialist support available to Welsh medium early years settings.
- Identify key resources that are not available in Welsh for early years settings on a local basis and in collaboration with other Local Authorities in the region.

Please see report below *'Review of Welsh Medium Early Years ALP – Registered Education Providers'* for more detail.

Review of Welsh medium Early Years A

The Access and Inclusion team have carried out reviews of the sufficiency of Welsh medium ALN provision in education settings across RCT to support learners with ALN. The first step was to review the additional learning needs of Welsh medium learners with ALN who access support via the Local Authority's Access and Inclusion Services.

At the current time, there is sufficient coverage as each team has Welsh speakers, however not all teams have permanent Welsh essential posts. To safeguard provision, there is a need to ensure that all teams have Welsh essential posts going forward. Over the last three years referrals to the Local Authority's Learner Support Service have doubled in number. Further analysis is required to analyse whether the increase in the number of referrals are from Welsh medium schools as this would demonstrate an increased demand for Welsh medium ALN specialist services. Current data indicates that some learners with significant and complex ALN who were previously attending Welsh medium education in RCT are now accessing specialist education provision.

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Potential areas for development:
- Ensure all teams in each service area have Welsh essential posts.
- Analyse demand for Welsh medium support from Access and Inclusion Service areas to increase the number of Welsh essential posts where there is the highest demand.
- To bring forward proposals to Cabinet to establish primary Welsh medium learning support class provision to encourage pupils with significant and complex ALN to continue their education though the medium of Welsh.

An audit of the additional learning needs of learners in Welsh medium mainstream education has been conducted to analyse the different types of additional learning needs learners have in each National Curriculum year. The findings of the audit have informed initial planning of provision in terms of the main focus being on the opening of a new Welsh medium learning support class which will open to learners from September 2024.

Proposed action moving forward:
A further audit is needed to include analysis of severity of need – e.g., eligibility criteria for specialist placement to inform short to medium term planning for development of Welsh medium specialist provision. A detailed Audit of ALN data within the WM sector has been undertaken.

A further audit has been carried out focussing on the provision maps of Welsh medium schools in order to evaluate the range of additional learning provision available and the impact of this. The audit highlighted areas of good practice and areas for development in relation to the quality of schools' additional learning provision and the impact of this for learners.

Potential areas for development:
- Identify key evidence-based interventions/resources that are not available in Welsh that would improve the additional learning provision offer in Welsh medium schools on a local basis in RCT and with other Local Authorities in the region.
- Explore opportunities for the development and adaptation of Welsh medium ALN interventions/resources on an all Wales basis, involving Welsh Government.
- Identify support for Welsh medium schools to ensure effective provision mapping to meet individual pupils' needs.

Please see report below *'Welsh Medium Provision Map Report'* for full detail.

Welsh Medium
Provision Map report

The Access and Inclusion team have been working collaboratively with Coleg y Cymoedd to carry out a scoping exercise of the post-16 Welsh medium provision currently being offered to learners at the college. This scoping exercise identified current Welsh medium/bilingual courses on offer and highlighted potential areas for development.

Potential areas for development:
- Work collaboratively with Coleg y Cymoedd to keep the Welsh medium ALN curriculum offer under review and informed by the needs of Welsh medium ALN learners identified through the transition process.
- Establish an agreed graduated response to meeting the needs of post-16 Welsh medium ALN learners and thresholds for support from the Local Authority.

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- Ensure that the development of post-16 processes for accessing Welsh medium additional learning provision at Coleg y Cymoedd is included in the RCT post-16 steering group Year 1 Action Plan.
- Develop consistent approaches and protocols in relation to securing additional learning provision for Welsh medium post-16 further education learners with Coleg Merthyr.

Please see report below *'Scoping Exercise of post-16 Welsh medium provision Coleg y Cymoedd'* for further detail.

Scoping exercise of
post-16 Welsh mediu

The Access and Inclusion team work provide Welsh medium Educational Psychology Services provided to Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council. Processes are being developed for post-16 ALN provision in further education in collaborating with the psychology service.

The Access and Inclusion team have been working with CSCJES to ensure effective ALN provision is available for learners in mainstream education and special schools and classes in RCT. Improvements have been made to the self-evaluation processes to ensure information regarding ALN forms part of each schools' monitoring, evaluation and review cycle. A new process has been agreed to implement a joint professional development opportunity and quality assurance process to ensure a shared understanding between Access and Inclusion services, CSCJES Improvement Partners, Headteachers, ALN Co-Ordinators and Governors regarding effective self-evaluation of ALN. This will include:

- Guidance for mainstream schools on effective self -evaluation of ALN (from September 2023).
- Training on effective self-evaluation for CSCJES Improvement Partners, Headteachers, ALNCos and Governors (from September 2023).
- Support and oversight by CSCJES Improvement Partners as part of their quality assurance processes – ongoing throughout academic year.
- Designated joint Access and Inclusion services and CSCJES meetings to discuss good practice and concerns to inform support for individual schools.

These audits and reviews which have been conducted during the first year of the WESP will be used to inform future planning of additional learning provision across RCT.

Development of Welsh Medium ALN Provision in our Locality
The Access and Inclusion team have been working closely with Ysgol Garth Olwg for the opening of a new Welsh medium Learning Support Class (LSC) provision for Key Stage 3 and 4 learners at the school. Provision was due to open to learners from September 2022 however, there have been many barriers due to not being able to recruit a specialist teacher. Recruitment for this post has been advertised numerous times throughout the academic year however the number of applicants and quality of the applications has been low. In recent months, appointment has been successful following readvertisement of the post as a secondment. Due to the delay in the appointment, a high level of ALN specific training and mentoring will be provided to the staff on an ongoing basis and evaluated through the Learning Support Class Quality Assurance protocol. This provision will open to learners from September 2023.

Proposals for the establishment of Welsh medium ALN provision in the new Welsh medium primary school in Rhydyfelin were previously listed as Year 2 to 3 actions however, to ensure we work at greater pace in response to identified need, the proposals have been brought forward. The proposals

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were presented to Cabinet for approval in May 2023 and consultation is now underway. If the consultation is successful, 2 new Welsh medium primary phase LSCs will be established in the new Welsh medium primary school in Rhydyfelin which will open to learners in 2024, enhancing its Welsh medium specialist ALN placement provision.

The Sufficiency of Welsh Medium ALN Workforce Available

A review has been carried out on the size and capability of the workforce available to deliver Welsh medium early years ALN provision, analysing ALNCo training for this age group to identify what training is available and whether it's being accessed. The analysis highlighted that a wide range of training is provided for settings through formal training sessions, drop-in sessions and forum sessions. Training is available for specific interventions in relation to individual learners. The analysis showed that attendance at training is variable with less than 50% of settings attending training opportunities relation to the new ALN system and inclusive practices. It also highlighted that the training and resources available are only available in English due to a lack of Welsh medium ALN specialist staff available to support early years settings.

Potential areas for development:
- Prioritise training opportunities that can be delivered though the medium of Welsh.
- Offer Welsh medium training to settings and analyse potential uptake.
- Explore establishing cross-border Welsh medium early years ALNCo forums and training opportunities with neighbouring Local Authorities.

The Access and Inclusion team consulted with Welsh medium ALNCos and Welsh medium staff within the Local Authority's Access and Inclusion services to gather information on the barriers to providing effective Welsh medium additional learning needs provision. The consultation was held through focus groups which had 17 participants: 8 Welsh medium ALNCos, 2 Welsh medium educational psychologists, 1 assistant Educational Psychologist, 6 members of the Learner Support Service and the additional learning provision team who work through the medium of Welsh in Welsh medium schools.

The consultation focussed on two main areas:
1) Perceived barriers to providing effective Welsh medium additional learning provision in RCT.
2) Possible solutions to overcoming barriers to providing effective Welsh medium ALP in RCT.

The focus group identified the following barriers:
- Lack of Welsh medium resources.
- Lack of appropriately trained/skilled staff.
- Limited opportunities for Welsh medium continuous professional development.
- Lack of Welsh medium specialist placement provision – e.g., Learning Support Classes in RCT.
- Parents having difficulty providing support.
- Lack of value placed upon the Welsh language – lack of equity.

Possible solutions identified included:
- Increase in the number of Welsh medium staff in Access and Inclusion services.
- Recognition of the value of the language.
- Increased funding and more Welsh medium resources.
- Provision of Welsh medium continuous professional development opportunities.
- Increased Welsh medium Learning Support Classes provision.
- Welsh language parent support groups.

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Further consultation was carried out to identify barriers ALNCos and other school-based staff face with providing effective Welsh medium additional learnings needs provision. To conduct the consultation, a focus group was held online with 40 participants in attendance from specialist teams.

The consultation focussed on two main areas:
1) Perceived barriers to providing effective Welsh medium additional learning provision in RCT.
2) Possible solutions to overcoming barriers to providing effective Welsh medium ALP in RCT.

The focus group identified the following barriers:
- Recruitment of Welsh medium ALN staff.
- Skillset of existing school staff in mainstream Welsh medium schools.
- Lack of specialist Welsh medium placement provision – e.g., Learning Support Classes.
- Budget restraints restricting ability of staff to improve their Welsh language skills.
- SEBD dual placement model – Welsh medium learners having to attend part-time English medium specialist placement.
- Lack of Welsh medium ALN resources.

Possible solutions identified included:
- Recognition of increase in central Welsh speaking ALN staff.
- Equity of provision – increasing specialist provision.
- Provision mapping and skills audit of Welsh medium schools regarding ALN.
- Development of Welsh medium resources.

The outcomes of both consultations, in particular the suggested solutions, will be used to identify specific actions to be progressed during year 2 of the WESP.

Audits have been undertaken to identify the Welsh language competency of staff working in all specialist ALN settings in RCT, this includes Learning Support Classes, Pupil Referral Units and special schools. Please see below for an overview of the outcome of the audits and potential follow up actions:

Central Access and Inclusion Services:
- 70% of the staff are at Welsh Language Competency Level 1.
- 10% of staff of the staff are currently at Welsh Language Competency Levels 2-4.
- 20% of the staff are currently at Welsh Language Competency Level 5.

All service areas have Welsh language staff at Level 5 and are able to provide a Welsh medium service with the exception of the early years team and additional learning needs administrative service (ALNAS), which does not work directly with pupils to provide specialist ALN assessment or provision. Despite nearly all service areas/teams within Access and Inclusion having Welsh medium staff, there is a need to ensure all teams have sufficient Welsh essential posts within their structure. Currently not all service areas have Welsh essential posts.

Initial potential areas for development:
- Ensure that all service areas have a Welsh essential post in their structure.
- Analyse demand for Welsh medium support from all service areas to increase the number of Welsh essential posts in specific service areas with the highest demand.

Please see report below *'RCT AI Staff Competency Levels'* for full analysis.

RCT Al Staff
Competency Levels.d

Learning Support Class Staff:
- Of the 50 LSC teacher responses, 60% are currently at Welsh Language Competency Level 1. This contrasts with the teaching assistants where 89% of the responses indicate that the teaching assistants are currently at Welsh Language Competency Level 1.
- 6% of the teachers indicate a Welsh language Competency Level of 4 with 3% of the teaching assistants reporting the same.
- There are no teachers currently at Welsh Language Competency Level 5 although 1 teaching assistant has identified that they are at this competency level.

Due to no LSC teachers identifying themselves as Level 5, it is not currently possible to develop a succession plan in relation to current LSC teachers taking up Welsh medium posts in our new Welsh medium LSCs and external advertisements will need to be made. It's also apparent that a review of the provision of Welsh language in the curriculum needs to be undertaken in LSCs to ensure compliance with the new curriculum due to the barriers identified by LSC staff.

Initial potential areas for development:
- Explore the feasibility of developing the Welsh language skills of the Level 4 teaching and non-teaching staff to provide enhanced Welsh medium capacity for LSC provision.
- Review delivery of Welsh in the Curriculum for Wales in LSCs to ensure pupils with ALN in English medium LSCs have access to their statutory entitlement for Welsh in line with statutory requirements.

Please see report below *'LSC Staff Competency Levels Summary'* for a more detailed breakdown.

LSC Staff
Competency Level Su

Special Schools and PRU Welsh Language Competency Levels:
- 75% of Special School/PRU teachers are at Welsh Language Competency Level 1 or 2.
- 7% of Special School/PRU teachers are at Welsh Language Competency Level 5.
- 87% of Special School/PRU teaching assistants are at Welsh Language Competency Level 1 or 2.
- 3% of Special School/PRU teaching assistants are at Welsh Language Competency Level 5.

An increase in the number of Welsh speaking staff at Level 5 in special schools/PRUs is needed to enable pupils to access Welsh medium education in these specialist settings with the aim of providing full time access to Welsh medium special school and PRU provision within the special schools/PRUs over time.

Initial potential areas for development:
- Discuss with relevant Local Authority departments on how to incorporate Welsh essential posts into the structure of special schools and PRUs.
- Consider the feasibility of establishing Welsh medium special school hub provision in designated special schools.

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Please see report below *'Special School PRUs Competency Levels'* for full breakdown.

Special Schools
PRU's Competency Le

The Sufficiency of Welsh Medium ALN Workforce in Other Service Areas

A key target of Outcome 6 of the WESP is to review and monitor the size and capability of the workforce available in other service areas to ensure there's sufficient workforce available to support Welsh medium ALN provision. We have started to strengthen connections between the Local Authority and the Local Health Board to support us achieving these targets. The Local Health Board created their own Strategic Delivery Plan to identify gaps in Welsh medium provision within the service. This is currently being delivered and a Welsh Language Steering Group has recently been established which is chaired by a board member as the core governance to ensure progress with all aspects of bilingual provision. Summary of the actions carried out during this academic year will be available via the Local Health Board's Annual Welsh Language Standards report which will be available from September 2023.

As part of their internal recruitment and workforce planning to support staff to learn or develop their Welsh language skills, an application has been submitted to the National Centre for Learning Welsh for support. If the application is successful, the Local Health Board will have dedicated support for its staff who wish to improve their skill or confidence in Welsh. Discussions are ongoing with Learn Welsh Glamorgan to provide support opportunities for members of staff who are beginners.

The Local Health Board are implementing changes around their recruitment process. A key change that is being worked on is the introduction of job advertisements being advertised in Welsh for positions where Welsh language skills are required. They have been creating a new job description template which will be used for all future job advertisement. This will include the need for all new members of staff to learn Welsh to Level 1. An assessment tool is now in place to assess the level of Welsh skill needed for all posts. A working group will be established in Year 2 of the WESP to move forward with these actions in line with their action plan.

Outcome 6 Sub-Group

A sub-group has been established to focus solely on each outcome of the WESP. The sub-groups provide an effective focus for the Local Authority in partnership with external groups and organisations. The sub-group have met virtually on a termly basis to review the actions listed on the Outcome 6 Annual Work Plan and provide updates on any progress made and to discuss next steps for actions, where appropriate. The sub-group meetings have provided opportunities for the Local Authority's Access and Inclusion team to work collaboratively with partners such as CSCJES, Coleg y Cymoedd and the Local Health Board to ensure effective Welsh medium ALN provision is available to learners in RCT.

IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

We have a dedicated group focussing solely on this outcome. The Head of Inclusion Services leads this sub-group and membership includes internal officers from the Access and Inclusion team, representation from the Local Health Board and representation from Welsh medium schools.

The initial sub-group meetings at the beginning of this academic year focussed on developing the work plan which details the overarching targets, the actions and the key activities required to achieve the targets. The Outcome 6 Sub-group meets on a termly basis to review the targets and actions listed on

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the work plan to provide an opportunity for members to provide updates on any progress made, where appropriate, and to identify ways to move forward with certain actions. The sub-group lead will review end dates of actions on the work plan to ensure the group remains on targets and in situations where the end date has surpassed, questions will be asked as to why and follow on steps agreed upon to ensure we move forward and don't miss any targets. Following each meeting, minutes of the meeting are shared with members of the sub-group and the 'Progress/Evaluation' column on the work plan is updated with any comments made during the meeting.

OUTCOME LEVEL RISKS

- Recruitment of specialist Welsh medium staff:

This is a risk which is evident at all stages of education from early years through to post-16. The experience we've had of not being able to recruit from the new LSC class at Ysgol Garth Olwg is evidence that this is a serious risk to the ongoing development of Welsh medium ALN provision in RCT.

- Early years ALN staff not sufficiently trained:

The analysis conducted whilst reviewing the sufficiency of the early years ALN workforce highlighted that less than 50% of settings have attended training opportunities in relation to the new ALN system and inclusive practices which demonstrates potential issues with engagement. We can provide the opportunities but cannot force staff to uptake.

- Lack of Welsh medium resources to support services and learners:

This is a common barrier which was identified through the focus groups.

ASSURANCE / MITIGATION ACTION

- Recruitment of specialist Welsh medium staff:

Intervention is needed at a national level to address the challenges being faced with lack of specialist staff available to support ALN services.

- Early years ALN staff not sufficiently trained:

Access and Inclusion services will work more closely with Welsh medium early years settings to promote the training opportunities available and encourage uptake of these opportunities.

- Lack of Welsh medium resources to support services and learners:

Increased funding is needed to create and develop more Welsh medium resources.

Outcome 7

Increase the number of teaching staff able to teach Welsh (as a subject) and teach through the medium of Welsh

KEY ANNUAL DATA

Welsh Language Unit Data

The data in the table that follows is provided by the Local Authority's Welsh Language Unit and outlines the total number and percentage of school-based staff who identified themselves as fluent or fairly fluent in the Welsh language.

Table 7.1

Total Number of Staff who Identified Themselves as Fluent or Fairly Fluent in Welsh							
No. of Staff with Welsh Language Skills		Fluent (Welsh Language Level 4 and 5)		Fairly Fluent (Welsh Language Level 3)		Total (Welsh Language Level 3, 4 and 5)	
Category	Total No. of Staff	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Non-School Based Staff	7,352	660	8.9%	146	2.0%	806	10.9%
Total	12,896	1,530	11.8%	347	2.7%	1,877	14.5%

PLASC DATA

The data in the table that follows is derived from PLASC and outlines the total percentage of teachers employed by the Local Authority who are able to teach through the medium of Welsh for the previous five academic years, up to and including this academic year. The data for 2022-23 demonstrates a drop in the percentage of qualified teachers teaching Welsh as a first language in comparison with 2021-2022, however the data also demonstrates an increase in the number of qualified teachers teaching other subjects through the medium of Welsh and the number of teachers who are able to teach through the medium of Welsh but are not doing so in their current post.

Table 7.2

Total Percentage of Teachers who are able to Teach through the Medium of Welsh					
	Academic Year				
	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Qualified Teachers Teaching Welsh as a First Language	10.9%	9.7%	8.8%	14.1%	10.9%
Qualified Teachers Teaching Welsh as a Second Language (Only)	38.6%	39.6%	36.3%	36.3%	36%

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Qualified Teachers Teaching Other Subjects through the Medium of Welsh	8.4%	9.7%	11.2%	5.5%	8.7%
Qualified Teachers Able to Teach through the Medium of Welsh, but not doing so	6.3%	3.8%	3.4%	2.9%	4.2%
Not Qualified to Teach through the Medium of Welsh	35.9%	37.2%	40.3%	41.2%	40.2%

SWAC data

Please see Appendix A for SWAC data 2022. Key themes emerging from the data is summarised as follows:

- **Table A.1** outlines the Welsh language ability of practitioners by school phase across all schools in RCT. The highest levels of proficiency in Welsh language was evident in the 40-49 age range with 150 staff members displaying this level of skill. A total of 433 of teachers had no skills in the Welsh language which is a clear area for improvement.
- **Table A.2** identifies teacher Welsh language proficiency by phase. A total of 318 out of the 433 teachers identified as having no Welsh language skills were in the secondary sector, with a further 90 in the all through school sector. This clearly requires targeting.
- **Table A.3** shows the Welsh language abilities of practitioners teaching Welsh as a subject only at primary level. Data for 2022 demonstrates that 155 out of 598 of teachers in English medium primary schools teaching Welsh as a subject had only entry level skills, suggesting that this is an area for further development.
- **Table A.4** identifies the Welsh language ability of teachers in English medium schools (years 7-14) by main subject. 15.2% had intermediate level skills (W4), 20.6% had advanced skills (W5) and 44.7% were proficient (W6).
- **Table A.5** identifies the Welsh language ability of teachers in English medium schools (years 7-14) by all subjects taught.17% has intermediate skills (W4), 24% had advanced skills and 52% were proficient (W6).
- **Table A.6** contains data on the Welsh language ability of teachers teaching through the medium of Welsh across all schools in RCT, split by school phase. A total of 5 had foundation level skills (4 primary, 1 PRU) and had 4 intermediate skills (3 primary and 1 secondary). A total of 68 had advanced skills, and 368 were deemed to be proficient (114 in primary, 117 in through/middle schools and 136 in secondary schools).
- **Table A.7** illustrates the Welsh language ability of those teaching through the medium of Welsh by their main subject. A total of 21 teachers of science and 25 in mathematics were deemed to be proficient in Welsh which is relatively low. A further teacher of mathematics teaching through the medium of Welsh was deemed to have advanced level skills.
- **Table A.8** identifies the Welsh language ability of those teaching through the medium of Welsh in all subjects taught. The data highlights that there are 532 teachers teaching through the medium of Welsh in all subjects taught (3 with intermediate, 28 with advanced and 501 with proficient level skills).
- **Table A.9** outlines the Welsh language ability of ALN Co-ordinators across all schools in RCT, split by school phase. Of the 16 ALNCos, 2 have advanced skills and 14 have proficient skills.
- **Table A:10** outlines the Welsh language ability of ALN support staff across all schools in RCT, split by school phase. Of these support staff, 36 have no skills and 44 have entry level skills suggesting that there is potential scope for supporting these staff to further improve their Welsh language skills.
- **Table A.11** demonstrates the Welsh language ability of the Local Authority's school-based workforce for the academic year 2020/21 – 2021/222. Data suggests that there has been a

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reduction in the number of staff with no Welsh language skills (from 21.2% in 2020-2021 to 20.7 in 2021-2022) and a slight growth of 0.6% and 1.9% in staff with entry level and foundation level skills respectively during the same period. Small gains were evident in advanced level skills (0.2%) but a small reduction was evident in the percentage of staff deemed to be proficient in the Welsh language during the same period (reduction of 1.6%).

- **Table A.12** outlines the total number of school-based workforce (including headteachers, school teachers and school learning support workers) employed by the Local Authority, teaching/working through the medium of Welsh for the academic year 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. Data highlights a small reduction in the percentage working through the medium of Welsh in their current post (a drop of 0.4%) and a slight reduction of 0.3% in the percentage being able to teach and work through the medium of Welsh but were not doing so.

ITRENT data

The datasets below are derived from the Local Authority's internal HR systems and demonstrate movement of teachers in Welsh medium education in terms of recruitment and retention. Data demonstrates that 43 Welsh medium practitioners were recruited in RCT during the academic year 2022-2023.

Table 7.3

Starters	Total
Headteacher	0
Assistant/Deputy Headteacher	0
Teacher Threshold	9
Teacher Main Scale	32
Instructor/Unqualified Teacher	2
Total	**43**

When comparing this against the total number of Welsh medium practitioners who terminated their employment during the academic year 2022-2023, data demonstrates a net loss of 2 practitioners across RCT.

Table 7.4

Leavers	Number	%
Headteacher	3	10.0%
Assistant/Deputy Headteacher	1	2.9%
Teacher - Threshold	18	8.5%
Teacher - Main Scale	23	23.0%
Instructor/Unqualified Teacher	0	0.0%
Total	**45**	**11.8%**

The data gathered on the reasons for leaving teaching posts (Table 7.5) demonstrates that the over 50% of practitioners left voluntarily, 17.8% reached the end of their contract, 13.3% left through mutual agreement and 8.9% transferred to another local authority.

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Table 7.5

Reasons for Leaving	Number	%
Age Retirement	1	2.2%
Compulsory Redundancy and Pension Access	1	2.2%
Compulsory Redundancy No Pension Access	1	2.2%
Death in Service	1	2.2%
End of Contract	8	17.8%
Mutual Agreement	6	13.3%
Transfer To Another Local Authority	4	8.9%
Voluntary	23	51.1%
Total	**45**	

The data available can also be broken down to age profiles of practitioners starting and leaving posts. The data in the tables below demonstrates that the 25-34 age category had the highest percentage of starters and the highest percentage of leavers, leaving a net loss of 3 practitioners within this age category for the academic year 2022-2023. Further improvement in retaining staff is required if we are to satisfactorily grow the education workforce.

Table 7.6

Age Profile/Breakdown of Starters	21-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Number of Starters	14	20	6	3	0	0
Percentage of Starters	32.6%	**46.5%**	14.0%	7.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Table 7.7

Age Profile/Breakdown of Leavers	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Number of Leavers	**2**	**23**	**7**	**4**	**9**	0
Percentage of Leavers	4.4%	**51.1%**	15.6%	8.9%	20.0%	0.0%

Welsh Development Programmes Data

The data in the table below is provided by CSCJES and demonstrates the number of RCT practitioners undertaking the Welsh in a Year Sabbatical Scheme for the previous four academic years, up to and including 2022-2023.

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Table 7.8

Welsh in a Year Sabbatical Scheme				
Year	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Number	5	3	1	2

The Welsh in a Year Sabbatical Scheme will end this academic year and will be replaced with the new Two Term and One Term Sabbatical Schemes. The data in the table below shows the number of RCT practitioners that have undertaken these courses this year.

Table 7.9

Number of RCT Practitioners Undertaking the One and Two Term Sabbatical Scheme		
Scheme	Two Term 2022-2023	One Term 2022-2023
Number	4	4

The data in the table that follows demonstrates the number of RCT practitioners undertaking Welsh language professional learning courses to develop their Welsh language skills, linked to the Welsh Language Competency Framework.

Table 7.10

Number of Practitioners Undertaking Welsh Language Professional Learning Course	
Number	7

The data in the table that follows is provided by CSCJES and outlines the number of senior leaders who attended the Consortium's 'Leading Welsh Strategically in School' programme for the previous three academic years, up to and including the academic year 2022-2023.

Table 7.11

Leadership of Welsh in English Medium Schools		
Year	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Number	8	6	5

The data in the table below has been provided by CSCJES and outlines the number of Welsh medium candidates receiving NPQH for the previous four academic years, up to and including the academic year 2022-2023.

Table 7.12

Number of Welsh Medium Candidates Achieving NPQH				
Year	**2019-2020**	**2020-2021**	**2021-2022**	**2022-2023**
Number	0	0	2	2

The data in the table below is gathered by CSCJES and demonstrates the number of Welsh medium RCT practitioners undertaking the Aspiring Headteachers Programme for the previous four academic years, up to and including 2022-2023.

Table 7.13

Numbers on the Aspiring Headteachers Programme				
Year	**2019-20**	**2020-21**	**2021-22**	**2022-23**
No. of Primary Schools	1	No course.	3	1
No. of Middle Schools	2		0	0
No. of Secondary Schools	0		1	1

The data in the table that follows is provided by CSCJES and outlines the number of Welsh medium practitioners undertaking the Middle Leaders Development Programme for the previous four academic years, up to and including the academic year 2022-2023.

Table 7.14

Numbers Undertaking Middle Leaders Development Programme				
Year	**2019-2020**	**2020-2021**	**2021-2022**	**2022-2023**
No. of Primary Schools	11	0	2	1
No. of Secondary Schools	0	0	1	7
No. of All Through Schools	1	2	1	0
Total	12	2	4	8

The data in the table below is provided by CSCJES and outlines the number of Welsh medium practitioners undertaking the Senior Leaders Development Programme for the previous three academic years, up to and including the academic year 2022-2023. This programme did not begin until the year 2020-2021 therefore this is the only data available.

Table 7.15

Numbers Undertaking Senior Leaders Development Programme			
Year	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
No. of Primary Schools	1	0	0
No. of Secondary Schools	1	2	1
No. of All Through Schools	2	2	1
Total	4	4	2

Open University Data

The data in the table below has been provided by the Open University and demonstrates the number of Welsh medium schools in RCT supporting students into teaching positions through alternative routes (ITE partnerships, Open University salaried route). The date input into the 'Qualifying' column is the expected date that each student will be qualified by.

Table 7.16

Number of Welsh Medium Schools in RCT Supporting Students into Teaching Roles via Alternative Routes into Teaching		
School	Numbers	Qualifying
Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun	1	July 2024
Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Evan James	1	July 2023
Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda	1	July 2024
Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Bronllwyn	1	Awaiting outcome

OUTCOME SUMMARY

Data Returns

To ensure accurate data is collected on the number of vacancies in the Local Authority across primary, secondary, special and ability, CSCJES and RCT Education Data team have been working with schools and practitioners to support accurate return of the SWAC through activities such as:

- CSC have created and published a playlist incorporating an explanatory video which focuses on schools' procedures for planning professional learning and accurately reporting on practitioner development in the SWAC.
- RCT Education Data team have provided workshops to support schools in completing their SWAC returns.

We will continue to work in partnership with CSCJES to ensure that schools' SWAC data accurately reflects practitioners' Welsh language skills and reflects the true skills of staff. Revised guidance on SWAC data has been devised and CSCJES and the Local Authority's Education Data team will actively engage with schools in RCT to ensure accurate completion on the SWAC to inform future planning.

In addition to SWAC datasets, further analysis of key datasets has been undertaken to inform strategic planning. For example, the Council's Human Resources information management system has been used to inform strategic planning. Data from the iTrent System, PLASC and SWAC have been used to identify staffing pressures across the education workforce and the data has been shared and presented to the Education and Inclusion Service Scrutiny Committee.

The data highlights the staffing pressures across the system and potential areas for further development. These include:

- Growing the number of central staff who identify themselves are fluent and fairly fluent Welsh speakers;
- Strengthening a range of partnerships and strategic interventions to grow the number of qualified teachers who are able to teach Welsh as a first language;
- Providing effective support and professional learning opportunities for qualified teachers who are able to teach through the medium of Welsh but are not doing so currently;
- Targeting the workforce who have 'no skills' or 'entry level skills' in the Welsh language and ensuring that they are supported to develop their Welsh language skills;
- Ensuring that teachers who teach in the English medium sector and have intermediate or advanced Welsh language skills have opportunities to access the necessary professional learning and support to become proficient so that they are able to teach through the medium of Welsh should they wish to do so;
- Ensuring that there are sufficient opportunities for staff with Welsh language skills to access the right leadership pathways to progress in their careers; and
- Promoting and growing the numbers of staff accessing alternative routes into teaching.
- Investing in careers advice and guidance for young people so that they see working within education as a potential and rewarding career choice.

Progress Made Against Increasing the Workforce

All four Welsh medium secondary schools in RCT have partnerships with local universities to provide opportunities for students. Strategic initiatives aimed at encouraging the development of alternative routes into teaching in the Welsh medium sector will continue using effective promotion and marketing opportunities. Current successful partnerships includes the:

- Ysgol Garth Olwg and YG Rhydywaun partnership with Cardiff Metropolitan University to support delivery of the ITE programme.

- Ysgol Llanhari and YG Cwm Rhondda partnership with University of Wales Trinity Saint David to support delivery of teaching programmes for students.

There have been some successes relating to the Open University salaried route into teaching but this requires further development and expansion.

The Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol have several projects ongoing aimed at teacher training such as the 'Dysgu'r Dyfodol' project which is targeted at Welsh speaking undergraduate students at any University studying any subject and in any year of their studies. Students on this programme will be matched with an early career teacher for mentoring and work experience opportunities. The Coleg are tracking progression of these students once they've completed their studies to identify whether they transfer into teaching positions. The project started in January 2023 and 50 applications were received for this academic year.

CSCJES and regional Headteachers have been working with Cardiff Metropolitan University and Welsh Government to explore potential new routes to achieving qualified teacher status (QTS) for practitioners with experience in an education setting (high level teaching assistants, FE lecturers).

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Welsh Government have agreed in principle a new fast track route to QTS for Welsh medium practitioners. The programme is currently being developed by Cardiff Metropolitan University with the aim of launching during 2023-2024.

The Local Authority's Workforce Development team are currently working on a targeted campaign to promote teaching as a profession. The team are creating a 'Teaching as a Profession' section on the Local Authority's new careers portal which will include information on the profession, the different routes available, support available for current practitioners looking to be supported into Welsh medium education, video clips of RCT practitioners talking about their experiences working in the profession. The Workforce Development team have been out to Welsh medium schools to hold video sessions, engaging with Welsh medium practitioners to promote the benefits of teaching as a profession and specifically through the medium of Welsh. Once completed, further marketing strategies will be deployed to ensure that it reaches the right target audience.

There are 2 schools in RCT which have supported students at Cardiff Metropolitan University on the PGCE Pontio group. This group is a short course aimed at developing confidence and use of Welsh to encourage student teachers to transfer into job opportunities in Welsh medium education. One further school has worked with Cardiff Metropolitan University to place a student on the 'Blas ar Ddysgu' programme which is a week taster in a Welsh medium school, aimed at undergraduate students from Cardiff Metropolitan University and Cardiff University.

The Sufficiency of Welsh Medium ALN Workforce Available
A review has been carried out on the size and capability of the workforce available to deliver Welsh medium early years ALN provision. A full and comprehensive analysis of this work is provided in Outcome 6.

Leadership Development
The Local Authority is proactive in developing its leadership capacity by running an annual Aspiring Leaders Programme. This programme is highly effective and is commissioned by the Local Authority as part of its succession planning strategy and was identified by Estyn as innovative practice in the Local Authority inspection in January 2023 and a best practice case study was requested and written. This annual programme includes aspiring leaders from the Welsh medium sector and every effort is made to encourage and secure good representation from the sector to involve senior leaders with Welsh language skills. There are currently 2 Welsh Medium practitioners enrolled on the 2023-2024 programme. Consideration is now being given to developing a Local Authority course for middle leaders to ensure earlier identification of potential future leaders, and funding has been secured to pilot this programme for a 12 month period.

CSCJES have widely promoted the NPQH and Aspiring Headteacher Programme via all communication channels and through Improvement Partner conversations with schools. Data on the numbers undertaking these programmes is detailed in Table 7.12 and 7.13 respectively. The numbers accessing these leadership programmes will require further growth during 2023/24 if we are to ensure sufficient future leadership capacity within RCT.

The Gyda'n Gilydd programme, which is a leadership programme made up of Welsh medium practitioners across the region, has 3 RCT practitioners on the current programme for 2022-2023.

The National Programme for Senior Leaders is delivered by Ysgol Llanhari on behalf of CSCJES. Data on the numbers undertaking leadership development programmes are referred to above in Table 7.15. A dip was evident in 2022-23 and further promotional work will be required in future to ensure a growth in numbers in the Welsh medium sector.

CSCJES held Governor training sessions during the summer term 2022 and the spring term 2023, focussing on enhancing awareness on the responsibility around the Welsh language. 14 governors attended and are now equipped to support school leaders. Further awareness raising on the WESP for governing bodies will be provided during 2023/24 academic year through chair of governors meetings with the Director of Education and her leadership team and via Director reports to governing bodies during the academic year.

Partnership Working to Upskill Staff

The Local Authority has been working with internal service areas and external partners to support school-based staff in improving their Welsh language skills.

CSCJES have been planning Welsh language development for practitioners strategically using the Welsh language competency framework and linking it to the SWAC. CSCJES have widely promoted their professional learning opportunities for the Welsh language via all communication channels and via Improvement Partner conversations with schools. During the academic year 2022-2023, 7 Welsh medium practitioners undertook Welsh language professional learning courses through CSCJES to develop their Welsh language skills, linked to the Welsh Language Competency Framework.

The Local Authority's Welsh Language Services are working with the Local Authority's ICT department for the secure roll out of different electronic applications to support the linguistic skill development of staff. If the roll out is successful, the applications will be placed on the devices of all Local Authority based staff in the first instance. Further work is needed to identify ways to successfully roll out the applications to school-based staff as not all members of staff use Local Authority devices. The Local Authority's Catering Services are the first cohort of school-based staff which will pilot the roll out of support.

Welsh Government's Hwb portal has been promoted with RCT schools and WESP partners via general communication channels. The portal includes a range of professional learning opportunities available for practitioners to develop their Welsh language skills.

The free resources available via Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to support staff with upskilling their Welsh language skills, have been shared with RCT schools and WESP partners via general communication channels:

- To enhance language skills - Gloywi Iaith (porth.ac.uk)
- Interactive learning resources for developing Welsh language skills in the context of the classroom - Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol : Adnoddau Iaith i Athrawon
- Support material for teaching Welsh as a second language - Blackboard Learn (porth.ac.uk) (need to register to access the resource)
- App Sgiliau Iaith - Search for 'Sgiliaith' on App store or Playstore.

CSCJES have been proactive in rolling out and promoting the support available to practitioners via the Welsh Sabbatical Schemes. Data on the numbers undertaking the sabbatical schemes for this academic year and previous years is referred to above in Table 7.8 and Table 7.9. The Welsh in a Year Sabbatical scheme will end this year and be replaced with the new One Term and Two Term Sabbatical schemes. CSCJES are currently recruiting for the following sabbatical courses which will take place in summer 2024:

- 5 week entry level course for teaching assistants
- 8 week foundation level course for teachers

The opportunities available have been widely promoted by CSCJES and the Local Authority's Education team.

CSCJES provide post-sabbatical scheme support which includes network meetings, sharing of good practice and resources, leadership of Welsh short course, bespoke 1:1 session with development officers and support to share their knowledge and skills with other practitioners. This will continue in 2023-2024 for practitioners returning to school from September 2023.

Outcome 7 Sub-Group

A sub-group has been established to focus solely on each outcome of the WESP. The sub-groups provide an effective focus for the Local Authority in partnership with external groups and organisations. The sub-group have met virtually on a termly basis to review the actions listed on the Outcome 7 Annual Work Plan and provide updates on any progress made and to discuss next steps for actions, where appropriate. Throughout the first year of this plan, as discussions have broadened membership has grown to include key partners such as Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol. There has been regional work underway to support the activities in relation to this outcome which has been widely promoted by CSCJES and the Local Authority's Education team. An action for Year 2 of the plan will be to link with the National Centre for Learning Welsh to further enhance our actions around this outcome.

IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

We have a dedicated group focussing solely on this outcome. The Director of Education and Inclusion Services leads this sub-group and membership includes internal officers, CSCJES, representation from both Welsh and English medium schools and Coleg y Cymoedd and representation from external partners to include Mudiad Meithrin, Welsh Government and Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol.

The initial sub-group meetings at the beginning of this academic year focussed on developing the work plan which details the overarching targets, the actions and the key activities required to achieve the targets. The Outcome 7 Sub-group meets on a termly basis to review the targets and actions listed on the work plan to provide an opportunity for members to provide updates on any progress made, where appropriate, and to identify ways to move forward with certain actions. These meetings have been held virtually and have had good attendance at each meeting. Many important points have been raised and actioned accordingly. The sub-group lead will review end dates of actions on the work plan to ensure the group remains on targets and in situations where the end date has surpassed, questions will be asked as to why and follow on steps agreed upon to ensure we move forward and don't miss any targets. Following each meeting, minutes of the meeting are shared with members of the sub-group and the 'Progress/Evaluation' column on the work plan is updated with any comments made during the meeting.

OUTCOME LEVEL RISKS

- Inaccurate SWAC returns:

Schools not completing the SWAC return accurately, providing inaccurate data to inform future education planning.

- Lack of Welsh medium teachers and support staff:

There's a lack of Welsh speaking teachers and support staff available to fill posts in schools across RCT, especially in certain subject areas. This is national issue but geographically we have additional challenges.

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- Low number of applicants for teaching courses at universities:

It's been reported that the numbers applying for teaching courses at Cardiff Metropolitan University are lower than previous years.

- High numbers of practitioners leaving the profession:

Data trends demonstrate a number of teachers and support staff are leaving the profession completely. We do however appear to have some success in recruiting but due to the number of staff leaving the our employment, the net gain is negligible. RCT experienced very high covid rates and death rates were the highest in Wale and the impact on the wider community and on the resilience of the workforce could be an issue. Retaining young professionals in the sector appear to be a particular challenge.

- Geographical location of RCT:

Due to where the county is situated geographically, this prevents some qualified practitioners who reside in neighbouring counties to travel to our schools for work due to greater employment opportunities being closer to home. Retention of staff therefore is an important consideration.

- Succession Planning:

Age profiles of the school-based workforce needs to be analysed at regular intervals in order to assist with strategic planning.

ASSURANCE / MITIGATION ACTION

- Inaccurate SWAC returns:
  - CSCJES have created and published a playlist incorporating an explanatory video which focuses on schools' procedures for planning professional learning and accurately reporting on practitioner development in the SWAC.
  - RCT Education Data team have provided workshops to support schools in completing their SWAC returns.
  - Support will be ongoing into Year 2 of the plan whilst schools are preparing their SWAC returns for 2023.

- Lack of Welsh medium teachers and support staff:
  - Implementing a workforce development campaign focusing specifically on the benefits of teaching or working within education in RCT.
  - Links between local Welsh medium schools, local Universities and Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to be strengthened to ensure students transfer into teaching opportunities once they've completed their studies.
  - Stronger links have been established with careers initiatives and more is being done to highlight the benefits of working within education and the different routes into teaching.
  - More high potential staff to be encouraged to engage with leadership programmes so that we have sufficient supply of high calibre leaders to meet future demand.

- Low number of applicants for teaching courses at Universities:

Links between local Welsh medium schools, local Universities and Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to be strengthened to promote the benefits of teaching as a profession and the routes available into teaching to school learners who are considering their future career pathways.

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- High numbers of practitioners leaving the profession:
  - Effective wellbeing support is put in place for those who are experiencing challenges.
  - It is important that exit interviews are undertaken to understand the reasons for leaving our employment as a Local Authority.
  - iTrent reports enable us to gather intelligence and to routinely scrutinise data to identify any trends.

- Geographical location of RCT:

Implement a targeted recruitment campaign to promote teaching as a profession in RCT and the benefits of working in our community and for RCTCBC as an employer.

- Succession Planning:
  - Continued delivery of the Local Authority's highly successful Aspiring Leaders Programme and implementation of plans to deliver a Middle Leaders Programme.
  - Proactive steps to be taken to ensure good engagement levels with the wide range of leadership programmes available with CSC.
  - Ensure that the professional learning provided is targeted and effectively upskills the language abilities of the workforce.

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Appendix 1A

SWAC data

The datasets in the tables below are derived from SWAC 2022.

The table below outlines the Welsh language ability of teachers against their age profile.

Table A.1

Teacher Age Profile by Welsh Language Ability								
Age	No skills	Entry	Foundation	Intermediate	Advanced	Proficient	No info	Total
Under 25	24	30	17	8	8	43	1	131
25-29	50	65	54	16	13	76	2	276
30-39	130	170	117	53	51	142	6	669
40-49	151	150	120	44	40	150	8	663
50-59	72	80	55	31	25	68	2	333
60 and over	**6**	**6**	**1**	**-**	**1**	**2**	**1**	**17**
Total	433	501	364	152	138	481	20	2,089

The table below outlines the Welsh language ability of practitioners by school phase across all schools in RCT.

Table A.2

Teacher Welsh proficiency by Phase (All Schools)							
Phase	No skills	Entry	Foundation	Intermediate	Advanced	Proficiency	No info
Middle school	90	50	16	11	9	124	5
PR<u>U</u>	6	19	3	0	1	0	0
Primary School	7	202	293	118	98	185	13
Special	12	45	15	6	3	5	0
Secondary	318	185	37	17	27	167	2
Total	**433**	**501**	**364**	**152**	**138**	**481**	**20**

The table below shows the Welsh language abilities of practitioners teaching Welsh as a subject only at primary level.

Table A.3

Teacher Teaching Welsh as a Subject Only (Primary)								
Medium Type	No skills	Entry	Foundation	Intermediate	Advanced	Proficiency	No info	Total
Dual	0	4	6	2	1	2	0	15
English Medium	0	155	243	104	35	48	13	598
Welsh Medium	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	**0**	**159**	**245**	**106**	**36**	**49**	**13**	608

The table below identifies the Welsh language ability of teachers in English medium schools by main subject.

Table A.4

Teachers Full-Person Equivalence (FPE) With Intermediate or Above Welsh Skills Teaching Years 7-14 In English Medium Schools by Main Subject				
	W4	W5	W6	
Subject Full Name	Intermediate	Advanced	Proficiency	Total
Total	**15.2**	**20.6**	**44.7**	**80.5**
Art	-	-	0.5	0.5
Biology	0.9	-	-	0.9
Business Studies	-	-	-	-
Chemistry	-	0.7	-	0.7
Drama/Theatre	-	-	-	-
Design & Technology	-	-	-	-
English	3.0	0.5	5.4	8.9
Engineering	-	-	-	-
Geography	1.0	-	0.8	1.8
History	1.0	1.0	-	2.0
ICT	0.5	0.8	-	1.3
Mathematics	3.0	1.0	3.0	7.0
Modern Foreign Language	0.5	-	1.3	1.8
Music	1.8	0.8	1.2	3.8
Physical Education	-	1.7	2.7	4.4
Physics	-	-	-	-
Personal & Social Education	-	-	-	-

Religious Education	1.7	2.4	2.1	6.2
Science	-	0.5	2.5	3.0
Social Sciences	-	-	-	-
Vocational Subject	-	-	-	-
Welsh Baccalaureate	1.0	-	0.9	1.9
Welsh	-	11.1	23.3	34.4
Other Humanities	0.8	-	-	0.8
Other Subject	-	-	1.0	1.0

The table below identifies the Welsh language ability of teachers in English medium schools by all subjects taught.

Table A.5

Teachers Full-Person Equivalence (FPE) With Intermediate or Above Welsh Skills Teaching Years 7-14 (Secondary Schools) In English Medium Schools by All Subjects Taught				
	W4	W5	W6	
Subject Full Name	Intermediate	Advanced	Proficiency	Total
Total	**17.0**	**24.0**	**52.0**	**93.0**
Art	-	-	1.0	1.0
Biology	0.9	0.2	0.1	1.1
Business Studies	-	-	0.1	0.1
Chemistry	-	0.8	0.5	1.2
Drama/Theatre	-	0.1	0.5	0.6
Design & Technology	-	0.1	0.2	0.3
English	3.0	0.5	5.5	9.0
Engineering	-	-	-	-
Geography	1.0	-	0.9	1.9
History	1.2	1.0	0.2	2.4
ICT	1.0	1.2	-	2.2
Mathematics	3.0	1.2	3.3	7.5
Modern Foreign Language	0.5	-	1.6	2.1
Music	1.8	1.0	1.4	4.2
Physical Education	-	1.9	3.2	5.0
Physics	-	0.0	-	0.0
Personal & Social Education	0.0	0.3	0.5	0.8
Religious Education	1.7	3.0	2.2	6.9
Science	0.1	1.1	2.9	4.1
Social Sciences	-	-	-	-
Vocational Subject	-	0.3	0.3	0.6
Welsh Baccalaureate	1.3	-	1.6	2.8

Welsh	0.5	11.5	25.1	37.1
Other Humanities	0.8	-	-	0.8
Other Subject	0.3	-	1.0	1.3

The table below contains data on the Welsh language ability of teachers teaching through the medium of Welsh across all schools in RCT, split by school phase.

Table A.6

Teaching Through Medium of Welsh in Current Post (All Schools)							
School Phase	**No skills**	**Entry**	**Foundation**	**Intermediate**	**Advanced**	**Proficiency**	**No info**
Middle	0	0	0	0	7	117	0
PRU	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
Primary	0	0	4	3	49	114	0
Special	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Secondary	0	0	0	1	11	136	0
Grand Total	**0**	**0**	**5**	**4**	**68**	**368**	**0**

The table below illustrates the Welsh language ability of those teaching through the medium of Welsh by their main subject.

Table A.7

Teaching Through Medium of Welsh in Current Post by Subject (Main Subject)								
	W1	**W2**	**W3**	**W4**	**W5**	**W6**	**W7**	
Subject Full Name	No skills	Entry	Foundation	Intermediate	Advanced	Proficiency	No info	**Total**
Total	**-**	**-**	**-**	**1**	**16**	**224**	**-**	**241**
Art	-	-	-	-	-	8	-	**8**
Biology	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	**2**
Business Studies	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	**3**
Chemistry	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	**4**
Drama/Theatre	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	**3**
Design & Technology	-	-	-	-	-	10	-	**10**
English	-	-	-	-	-	19	-	**19**
Engineering	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	**-**
Geography	-	-	-	-	-	7	-	**7**
History	-	-	-	-	-	7	-	**7**
ICT	-	-	-	-	-	8	-	**8**
Mathematics	-	-	-	-	1	25	-	**26**

Modern Foreign Language	-	-	-	1	1	7	-	**9**
Music	-	-	-	-	1	7	-	**8**
Physical Education	-	-	-	-	-	19	-	**19**
Physics	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	**1**
Personal & Social Education	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	**3**
Religious Education	-	-	-	-	2	4	-	**6**
Science	-	-	-	-	-	21	-	**21**
Social Sciences	-	-	-	-	-	7	-	**7**
Vocational Subject	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	**6**
Welsh Baccalaureate	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	**6**
Welsh	-	-	-	-	11	43	-	**54**
Other Humanities	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	**4**
Other Subject	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	**-**

The table below identifies the Welsh language ability of those teaching through the medium of Welsh in all subjects taught.

Table A.8

Teaching Through Medium of Welsh in All Subjects Taught (Teaching Years and Above)								
	W1	**W2**	**W3**	**W4**	**W5**	**W6**	**W7**	
Subject Full Name	No skills	Entry	Foundation	Intermediate	Advanced	Proficiency	No info	**Total**
Total	**-**	**-**	**-**	**3**	**28**	**501**	**-**	532
Art	-	-	-	-	-	11	-	**11**
Biology	-	-	-	-	-	10	-	**10**
Business Studies	-	-	-	-	-	7	-	**7**
Chemistry	-	-	-	-	-	8	-	**8**
Drama/Theatre	-	-	-	-	2	12	-	**14**
Design & Technology	-	-	-	-	-	24	-	**24**
English	-	-	-	-	-	24	-	**24**
Engineering	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	**-**

Geography	-	-	-	-	2	9	-	**11**
History	-	-	-	-	-	15	-	**15**
ICT	-	-	-	-	-	14	-	**14**
Mathematics	-	-	-	-	1	32	-	**33**
Modern Foreign Language	-	-	-	1	2	11	-	**14**
Music	-	-	-	-	2	10	-	**12**
Physical Education	-	-	-	-	-	24	-	**24**
Physics	-	-	-	-	-	9	-	**9**
Personal & Social Education	-	-	-	1	1	35	-	**37**
Religious Education	-	-	-	-	3	8	-	**11**
Science	-	-	-	-	-	35	-	**35**
Social Sciences	-	-	-	-	-	12	-	**12**
Vocational Subject	-	-	-	-	-	27	-	**27**
Welsh Baccalaureate	-	-	-	-	-	47	-	**47**
Welsh	-	-	-	1	13	53	-	**67**
Other Humanities	-	-	-	-	1	26	-	**27**
Other Subject	-	-	-	-	1	38	-	**39**

The table below outlines the Welsh language ability of ALN Co-ordinators across all schools in RCT, split by school phase.

Table A.9

Number of Additional Learning Needs Co-Ordinators (ALNCo) By Welsh Language Ability									
	No. of Schools	**No. of Schools with an ALNCo**	**No skills**	**Entry**	**Foundation**	**Intermediate**	**Advanced**	**Proficiency**	**No info**
All schools	115	115	11	24	37	15	12	20	3
Welsh Medium schools	16	16	-	-	-	-	4	12	-

The table below outlines the Welsh language ability of ALN support staff across all schools in RCT, split by school phase.

Table A.10

Number of Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Support Staff by Welsh Language Ability							
School Medium	**No skills**	**Entry**	**Foundation**	**Intermediate**	**Higher**	**Proficiency**	**No info**
Dual	2	1	0	0	0	1	0
English Medium	34	43	26	9	5	5	3
Welsh Medium	0	0	0	0	4	11	0
Total	**36**	**44**	**26**	**9**	**9**	**17**	**3**

The table below demonstrates the Welsh language ability of the Local Authority's school-based workforce for the academic year 2020-2021 and 2021-2022.

Table A.11

Welsh Language Ability of Total Teachers (Including Headteachers, School Teachers and School Learning Support Workers) Employed by the Local Authority				
	Academic Year 2020–2021		**Academic Year 2021-2022**	
Skill Level	**Number**	**%**	**Number**	**%**
No Skills (NS)	450	21.2%	433	20.7
Entry Level (EL)	499	23.4%	501	24.0
Foundation Level (FL)	329	15.5%	364	17.4
Intermediate Level (IL)	167	7.9%	152	7.3
Advanced Level (AL)	137	6.4%	138	6.6
Proficient Level (PL)	523	24.6%	481	23.0
Information Not Obtained (INO)	21	1%	20	1.0
Total	**2,126**	**100%**	**2,089**	**100%**

The data in the table that follows outlines the total number of school-based workforce (including headteachers, school teachers and school learning support workers) employed by the Local Authority, teaching/working through the medium of Welsh for the academic year 2020-2021 and 2021-2022.

Table A.12

Total Teachers Employed by the Local Authority Teaching/Working Through the Medium of Welsh				
Category	**Academic Year 2020–2021**		**Academic Year 2021-2022**	
	Number	**%**	**Number**	**%**
Teaching/Working Through the Medium of Welsh in Current Post	462	21.7%	445	21.3%
Able to Teach/Work Through the Medium of Welsh but not doing so in Current Post	144	6.8%	135	6.5%
Unable to Teach/Work Through the Medium of Welsh	859	40.4%	874	41.8%
Teaching Welsh as a Subject Only	661	31.1%	635	30.4%
Total	**2,126**	**100%**	**2,089**	**100%**

WESP annual review report feedback

Outcomes	Feedback	Action for LA
Outcome 1	The increase in Welsh-medium Flying Start providers (from 14 – 21) during 2022-23 is positive and has enabled you to increase the number of Welsh-medium places as part of your phase 2 expansion. Hopefully your efforts in reviewing your information for parents/carers, collaboration with Mudiad Meithrin and others will lead to those places, and Cylchoedd Meithrin places more broadly, being filled. Whilst there are fewer children accessing Welsh-medium nursery that you projected, there are fewer children across both sectors overall. Nevertheless, it's clear that you recognise this as one of your key priority areas during this initial period of WESP delivery and it's encouraging to see how many of the actions set out in your 5-year action plan you've implemented and/or progressing. We are currently working with our childcare and capital funding colleagues with regard to your Cylch Meithin Beddau proposal. You will receive an update very shortly. We've received confirmation that we'll be able to share annual Mudiad Meithrin data for 2022/23 with you by the end of the week.	Discussion with WG.
Outcome 2	As with Outcome 1 data, the number of 5-year old learners accessing Welsh-medium education during 2022-23 is less that projected. We recognise the	

	potential impact the fall in birthrates may have and will be monitoring the situation to identify future trends. We're pleased to hear your Ysgol Llwyn y Forwyn and Ysgol Awel Taf developments are progressing well. It's reassuring to hear time has been invested in reviewing the information available to parents/carers on your website. We know that this has been achieved by working closely with your sub-group stakeholders and is an excellent example of partnership working. We're pleased you've been able to appoint your late immersion lead during 2022-23 and are already supporting learners transferring to Welsh-medium schools. Do you see there is an opportunity to attract learners from the English-medium stream of Ysgol Heol y Celyn with the establishment of Ysgol Awel Taf?	Discussion with WG.
Outcome 3	Your transition rates have always been consistently strong, particularly between foundation phase to reception and year 6 to year 7. With regard to key stage 4 to 5 transition, which is much lower, it's good to have the comparative data with the English-medium sector to give perspective. The increase in secondary school surplus places (from 21% in 2020-21 to 27% in 2022-23) will need monitoring. We'd be interested to hear over the coming year what impact the changes implemented this year with regard to in-year transfers is/may be having on reducing the number of learners leaving the Welsh-medium sector.	Discussion with WG.
Outcome 4	Progress made between CSCJES, Gyda'n Gilydd Partnership and the WJEC in developing vocational courses sounds very positive. The lack of available Welsh language vocational courses has been raised by your Welsh-medium Secondary Heads over several years and is obviously impacting learner decisions with regard to their post-16 education.	Discussion with WG.

		Is the work undertaken by Coleg y Cymoedd to develop its bilingual offer welcomed by Welsh-medium schools or are there tensions?	
Outcome 5		It's great to hear that your Welsh-medium and English-medium schools continue to engage in the Siarter Iaith and Cymraeg Campus Programme. Its particularly encouraging to hear that your special schools and units will also soon be included. Evidence provided of progress made against the actions in your action plan and good evidence of an effective partnership with the Urdd and Menter Iaith in preparation to the Eisteddfod coming to the area in 2024.	Discussion with WG.
Outcome 6		Whereas just under half of local authorities across Wales continue to review their provision for learners with additional needs, its pleasing to hear that you've concluded your review and can now proceed to act on its findings. Evidence provided is comprehensive. The lack of specialist staff to support the early years sector has been highlighted in other areas too and the ALN team have been updated. A task and finish group focusing on ALN, and the Welsh language was established by the Welsh Government before the end of the Summer term and a representative from Mudiad Meithrin is a member. Research is being commissioned to identify, review, and bring consistency to the data available on Welsh-language ALN provision. This will commence in January, and we'll keep you updated of its progress.	Discussion with WG.
Outcome 7		Evidence is provided of the extensive work carried out during 2022-23 to collate and test a number of workforce datasets including SWAC, PLASC and internal data collections. There are no quick wins as we know, however, the in-depth analysis undertaken by yourselves during this past reporting year has provided valuable insights into	Discussion with WG.

| | teacher recruitment, retention, and promotional trends. With your permission, we'd like to use your approach to Outcome 7 as an example of good practice to present to the External Workforce Board, established last year to implement the Welsh Government's 10-year workforce plan.

Revised SWAC guidelines were introduced during the summer term to encourage better use of the census by schools and local authorities as a tool for planning and analysing local education workforce needs. The SWAC reporting period will open soon and we are keen to hear about your experience of using it and where it needs to be further strengthened. | |