



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: Tracy Watson - Senior Democratic & Scrutiny Officer (07747 485567)

YOU ARE SUMMONED to a hybrid meeting of the **EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** to be held on **WEDNESDAY, 13TH MARCH, 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 Monday, 11 March 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 22nd January 2024.

5 - 10

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.

OFFICER'S REPORTS

4. 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.

11 - 56

5. UNIVERSAL PRIMARY FREE SCHOOL MEALS

For Committee Members to scrutinise and challenge the update on the roll-out of Universal Primary Free School Meals (UPFSM) in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

57 - 66

6. OVERVIEW OF THE POST-16 OFFER

For Committee Members to scrutinise and challenge the report on the Post-16 Curriculum offer across RCT Secondary Schools and Through Schools, and update on the Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Act.

67 - 78

7. CHAIR'S REVIEW AND CLOSE

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

8. 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 Lises,
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

This page is intentionally left blank



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee held on Monday, 22 January 2024 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 J Cook
Councillor J Elliott Councillor S Hickman
Councillor C Lises Councillor M Maohoub
Councillor J Smith Councillor K Webb

Co-Opted Members in attendance:-

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

Officers in attendance:-

Ms G Davies, Director of Education and Inclusion Services
Ms C Edwards, Head of Service Transformation And Data Systems
Ms C Jones, Head of Access & Inclusion
Mr T Britton, Head of Achievement RCT – primary sector
Ms S Corcoran, Head of Achievement and Wellbeing for secondary and through schools in RCT
Mr P Nicholls, Service Director, Legal Services
Ms L Howell, 21st Century School Organisation and Business Manager
Mr D Williams, Head of Attendance and Wellbeing Service
Ms S Daniel, Principal Democratic Services Officer

Invitees:-

Ms C Seery, Managing Director, CSC
Ms L Blatchford, Deputy Managing Director, CSC
Ms K Williams, Principal Improvement Partner for RCT Secondary and Special Schools, CSC
Mr S Williams, Principal Improvement Partner for RCT Primary and All-Age Schools, CSC

41 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies of absence were received from County Borough Councillor D Wood and Co-opted Member, Mr L Patterson.

42 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

In accordance with the code of conduct, the following declarations were made:

Mr Veale - Personal interest Agenda item 5 & 6 “ I am a Governor at Hawthorn High School”

County Borough Councillor S Evans - Personal Interest item 5,6 & 7
“My son’s School is mentioned in the report”
“I am Vice Chair of Governors of a school mentioned in the reports”
“I work for the University of South Wales”
“I am Vice Chair of Governors of a School mentioned in the report”

County Borough councillor M Ashford - Personal Interest in agenda item 5
“ I am a Governor of Pontyclun Primary School

County Borough Councillor J Brencher - Personal Interest in agenda item 5 & 6 “ I formerly taught at Hawthorn High School”

County Borough Councillor C Lises - Personal Interest in agenda item 5 & 6 “I am a Governor at Hawthorn High School”

County Borough Councillor Jayne Smith - Personal interest in item 7 “ I am a Governor at Llyn Y Forwen

County Borough Councillor S Hickman - Personal interest in item 5 “ My daughter attends Ynyshir Primary School”

43 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on the 14th December were approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

44 CONSULTATION LINKS

The principal Scrutiny Officer advised Members of the published consultations and reminded Members that if they had any queries they can contact the Scrutiny Team.

45 WELSH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION - STRUCTURE OF THE SCHOOL YEAR

The Principal Scrutiny Officer presented the report to Members for them 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.

Following presentation of the report, the Chairperson invited Members comments and observations on the proposals.

Concerns were raised that an extension to school holidays during the autumn/ winter terms could extend child poverty due to families needing to heat their homes during the day in the colder months if the children are home and provide an additional hot meal during the day. If a change to the term time is taken forward, an extra week in May is preferred by Members.

Members preferred to retain the current arrangements regarding notification of GCSE results to ensure continuity with English counterparts to avoid confusion and possible advantages of Welsh students receiving results first.

Some Members considered that keeping the 6 weeks holiday during the summer months was better for children's wellbeing due to the longer days and warmer weather. Members were not against reducing this to 5 weeks with the additional week preferred by Members added during the May / June holiday

Members were in support of separating the Easter holidays from the Bank Holidays to even out the Spring / Summer Terms. A Member also commented that the length of the autumn term is long and staff and learner wellbeing should be considered here.

Members commented that more even term times could support Children with ALN who can suffer with longer term times as they generally prefer structure and routine.

A Member made the observation that the current holiday structure is an attraction to many people looking to go into the profession so changing this could affect people wanting to go into the teaching profession.

Members stated that any changes to the current structure should have a consideration not only on the learners but the wellbeing of staff as changing the structure could have a negative effect on them.

Members were concerned that changing the current structure could also make it difficult for childcare for parents, particularly for those who commute for work or teach in England where the term times will remain unchanged.

In considering Children's Health and Wellbeing, Members commented that rather than change the term times, a review of start times for schools should be undertaken to avoid the need for learners to be starting their commute on public transport at 7am

Following consideration of the information it was **RESOLVED** to:

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

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

The Chairperson welcomed the officers from the Consortium and thanked them for attending. Upon reviewing the report, the Chair asked the Officers if they had an additional presentation or any further information they would like Members to receive before they went into questions comments.

Upon considering the information before them, the Committee agreed to defer this item and requested that it be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee. Members felt the report contained lots of data which was difficult to determine what was specific to RCT. They asked that the Officers return to a future meeting with a report which details the following:

- Progress of Schools in Special Measures
- Partnership Working
- Information in relation to School Governors and training
- Broader CSC information removed and replaced with RCT relevant data and specifics
- Reduce volume of report and streamline. Members supported the use of a Powerpoint presentation.
- Extend invitation to attend meeting to Headteacher from the School Improvement Group

The Managing Director CSC thanked Members for their observations and for the clear steer for a future report. They assured they would bring this information to a future meeting streamlined and supported by a Powerpoint presentation.

Following conclusion of discussions it was **RESOLVED** to:

1. Defer the item and receive at a future meeting of the Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee supported by a presentation of RCT relevant data.

47 ESTYN RECOMMENDATIONS

The Director Education and Inclusion provided 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. The Director continued that the

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

A Member asked what the target completion date is and will the Committee be updated on its progress.

The Director Education and Inclusion replied that there are detailed plans that sit under recommendations with five strategic priorities that form the basis of the framework of an annual delivery plan. The Director continued that they will develop a brand new delivery plan in April, with lots of actions that will be monitored on a quarterly basis. The Director reassured that every action has an accountable officer and specific timetable that is reviewed and monitored. The Director continued that they are on target to address the issues and acknowledged there is significant work needed to address attendance and exclusion issues. The Director confirmed that the delivery plan can be shared with Members of the Committee in due course.

A Member asked if the reoccurring issues such as attendance are partly aligned to the high number of children living in poverty. The Director Education and Inclusion advised that attendance has a significant improvement journey as there are many different complexities that exist in this area and has been ongoing since before the pandemic. The Director continued that Welsh Government have a task group who challenge these issues on a national basis whilst the Authority are working in partnership with schools to resolve.

Members acknowledged that the number of recommendations have halved which is already significant progress, and the list of recommendations are already built in to the Education Scrutiny Work Programme so will continue to be monitored by Members including the work of the Consortium and how they are supporting us in addressing the recommendations. The Member suggested a broad report back to Committee in a years' time from officers on the delivery plans to demonstrate progress.

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED** to:

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

48 WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN (WESP) - ANNUAL PLAN UPDATE

The Director Education and Inclusion provided an update on the implementation and the progress of the Council's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) 2022–2032

Members were advised that The Council's Annual Review Report for year one of the WESP was submitted to Welsh Government for consideration on 31st July 2023. Feedback from Welsh Government on the report was received on 14th November 2023 and the feedback received was largely positive. The Officer continued that 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 were listed in the report.

Members considered that due to the volume of reports received that it had been difficult to give the report the Scrutiny that it needed. They also considered that the report was too lengthy and a huge amount of data and many embedded links and documents making reading the report difficult. The Committee requested that the item be deferred and brought back to Committee at a future date with a summary of the information required for Members to effectively scrutinise the report.

The Director Education and Inclusion thanked Members for their observations and proposed that each Member of the Senior Leadership Team provides a summary of each of the outcomes which can be embedded to a report for Members and possibly extend the invite to partners to attend the meeting also.

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED** to:

1. Defer the item to the next meeting with a report containing a summary of each outcome from each Member of the Senior Leadership Team

NB: In line with the Council's Overview & Scrutiny procedural rules, this original item of business will now be considered by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

49 CHAIR'S REVIEW AND CLOSE

The Chair thanked Members & Officers for attending and their contributions and felt it had been a really useful discussion and, she looked forward to having some of the detailed reports back. The Chair reminded Members that the next meeting would be on 13th March 2024.

50 URGENT BUSINESS

None.

This meeting closed at 6.20 pm

**Cllr S Evans
Chair**

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



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2023-24

EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

13th MARCH 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 7.5.5 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

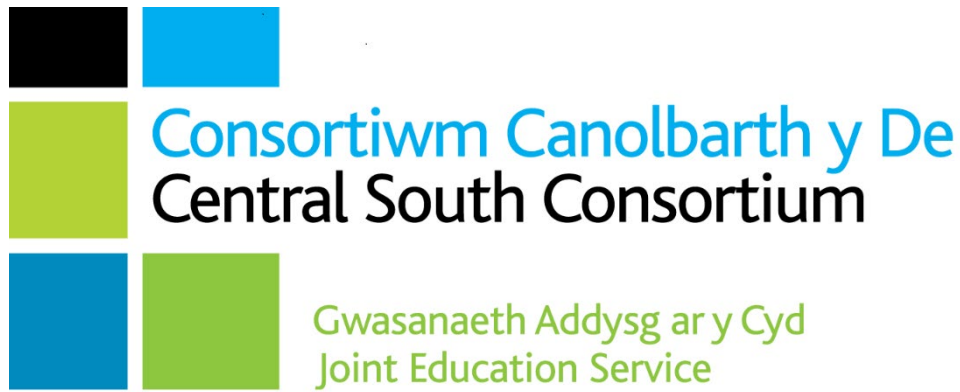
RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EDUCATION & INCLUSION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

13th MARCH 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 March 2024)

1.0	Purpose of the Report	5
2.0	Conclusions	5
3.0	Next Steps	10
4.0	Overview of Performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estyn Inspections • Alps Analysis 	11
5.0	Support and Challenge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement Partner Deployment • Work Programme of Improvement Partners (IPs) and Principal Improvement Partners (PIPs) 	13
6.0	Support for Schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools Receiving Enhanced Support 	15
7.0	Professional Learning & Support:	16
8.0	Equity (Vulnerable Learners)	31
9.0	CSC Contribution to Supporting LA Priorities	33
10.0	Value for Money	33
11.0	Sharing of Practice	38
	Appendices A - B	39

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 Rhondda Cynon Taf (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 CONCLUSIONS

CSC has developed a framework for self-evaluation based upon the guidance provided by Estyn's local authority inspection of RCT.

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.

2.1 Leadership and Safeguarding within CSC as an organisation.

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

Table 22: Summary of areas of focus informing self-evaluation activity in CSC in respect of Leadership & Safeguarding within CSC

Area	Sources of Evidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quality and effectiveness of leaders and managers• Self-Evaluation processes and improvement planning• Professional learning• Safeguarding• Use of resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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• Managing Director meetings with RCT's Director of Education• RCT HoAs, LA officers and LA PIPs meetings

Strengths included:

- Leaders / Managers have established a clear vision involving all stakeholders over time, which encompasses partnership working.
- RCT priorities embedded into the CSC Business Plan.
- Strong strategic partnerships with RCT stakeholders.
- Leaders incorporate feedback to improve quality of provision and processes to support schools and RCT practitioners.

- Effective induction programme results in staff being well placed to work effectively with RCT schools.
- High expectations to engage in Professional Learning developed to support individual and RCT LA 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 RCT
- 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

2.2 Professional Learning

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

Table 23: Summary of areas of focus informing self-evaluation activity in CSC in respect of Professional Learning

Area	Sources of Evidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for school improvement • Support for vulnerable learners across RCT • Design of the professional learning offer which reflects the needs of RCT pupils and professionals. • Impact of professional learning • Support for Welsh in Education Strategic Plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional learning offer- website • Engagement spreadsheet and analysis • Bespoke support analysis and evaluations • Evaluation data summary • RCT LA information reports / scrutiny reports • Area leads evaluations / reports • School improvement priorities • RCT 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 RCT, 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 RCT and 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.
- 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.
- CSC provide strong support to local authorities as a key partner to delivering Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) targets.
- All eligible NQTs passed induction in the local authority in 2020/21, with 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 RCT.
- 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.

2.3 Support for School Improvement

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

Table 23: Summary of areas of focus informing self-evaluation activity in CSC in respect of School Improvement in RCT

Area	Sources of Evidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring and reporting schools' progress • Providing bespoke support • Intervention in schools causing concern. • Supporting vulnerable learners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QA processes and feedback from schools • IP knowledge / SIPL entries • Estyn reports and case studies / LALI • RCT 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 • RCT's ASR information sharing meetings

Strengths included:

- Skills, expertise and knowledge of CSC team.
- IPs develop strong relationships with schools to challenge and support, in partnership with RCT LA.
- First-hand evidence gathering is aligned with school MER processes.
- Strong systems and processes to monitor 'schools causing concern'.
- An improved approach to progress reviews in RCT, that is consistent across primary, all-age and secondary schools.
- Sharing of school level intelligence and information with LA partners identifying significant risks, concerns by exception and agreeing actions for challenge and support, for example, RCT's ASR information sharing meetings.
- An agile approach is used to support the needs of individual schools.
- CSC have a clear regional approach for equity and excellence.
- All schools in RCT 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.

3.0 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:

3.1 Leadership and Safeguarding within CSC as an organisation.

- Further develop professional relationships with elected members / officers in RCT LA.
- 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.

3.2 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 RCT.
- 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 RCT LA approach for coaching and mentoring.
- Continue to develop reporting on the outcomes of PL in school improvement.

3.3 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.

4.0 OVERVIEW OF PERFORMANCE

4.1 Estyn Inspections

All Estyn inspections were suspended in March 2020¹; however, a new pilot framework² 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.

In RCT LA, 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 an “Interesting or Innovative Practice Case Study” 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: 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

Llwydcoed Primary School was requested to produce an Innovative Practice Case Study following their Estyn inspection based on ‘*Reducing the cost of the school day and providing additional support for low-income families in the community*’.

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.

¹ <https://www.estyn.gov.wales/news/estyn-will-not-inspect-maintained-schools-next-academic-year-statement-meilyr-rowlands-hmci>

² <https://www.estyn.gov.wales/news/owen-evans-her-majestys-chief-inspectors-speech-17-february-2022>

As a result of these schools remaining, or being placed into an Estyn category, they have close monitoring, support and challenge via the joint LA and CSC 'Schools Causing Concern' process of progress reviews. *See section 5.1 for further information on this process.*

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

4.2 Alps Analysis

Alps value added performance analysis measures progress against national³, aspirational benchmarks for each individual student. For 2023, the analysis identified the following key points:

A Level

- Two schools matched to top 25% (performance of pupils is within or exceeds the top 25% of the national benchmark)
- Five schools matched to middle 50% (performance of pupils is within the middle 50% of the national benchmark)
- Four schools matched to bottom 25% (performance of pupils is within or below the bottom 25% of the national benchmark)
- Student outperformed in Drama & theatre Studies and under performed in Art, Economics, English Language, Eng Literature and Government & Politics. All other subjects were in the middle 50% when benchmarked.
- All bar two of the eleven prior attainment bands were in the middle 50% when benchmarked. However, broadly the higher prior attaining students didn't achieve the valued added that the lower attaining students achieved.
- A Level results are overall similar to 2019 and decreased from 20/21 and 21/22 due to Teacher assessed grades.

AS Level

- No schools matched to top 25% (performance of pupils is within or exceeds the top 25% of the national benchmark)
- Five schools matched to middle 50% (performance of pupils is within the middle 50% of the national benchmark)
- Four schools matched to bottom 25% (performance of pupils is within or below the bottom 25% of the national benchmark)
- Student outperformed in Drama & theatre Studies, English Lit, History and Physical Education and under performed in Art, Business Studies, Government & Politics and Law. All other subjects were in the middle 50% when benchmarked.

³ as defined by Alps for their analysis.

- All but four prior attainment bands were in the middle 50% when benchmarked. However, broadly the higher prior attaining students didn't achieve the value added that the lower attaining students achieved.
- AS Level results are overall similar to 2019 and decreased from 20/21 and 21/22 due to Teacher assessed grades.
- High ability student made more progress than low ability pupils. The top two bands progressed in line with the top 25% of students nationally. Key Stage 4

GCSE

Of the schools that we have ALPS data for.

- Two schools matched to top 25% (performance of pupils is within or exceeds the top 25% of the national benchmark)
- Four schools matched to middle 50% (performance of pupils is within the middle 50% of the national benchmark)
- One school matched to bottom 25% (performance of pupils is within or below the bottom 25% of the national benchmark)
- Students outperformed in Art & Design, French, Geography, History, Home Economics, PE, Polish and Spanish and underperformed in Textiles, Some D&T subjects, Eng Lang, Hospitality, Media Studies and Additional Science. All other subjects were in the middle 50% when benchmarked nationally.

5.0 Support and Challenge

5.1 Improvement Partner Deployment

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

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. IPs have continued to commission bespoke support and intervention from the wider support teams within the CSC.

5.2 Work Programme of Improvement Partners and Principal Improvement Partners

Throughout the 2022-23 academic year, IPs worked collegiately with RCT 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 Improvement⁴.

⁴ <https://www.cscjes.org.uk/repository/discovery/resource/97df5386-f46a-4287-a766-20eedd70db27/en?sort=recent&strict=0>

IPs built an individual work plan with each school to ensure these activities were built into the school improvement conversations. There were ongoing themes which were a focus of all visits, this included progress of learners, curriculum development, quality of learning and teaching, leadership, well-being, equity and inclusion, effectiveness of self-evaluation and improvement planning. In addition to this workstream, IPs undertook bespoke support for school leaders (middle and senior) and governing bodies. For example, RCT IPs supported governing bodies develop their skill set through the introduction of CSC's Governing Body Self Evaluation Toolkit, supported newly appointed CoGB/VCoGB or provided support as they prepared for interviews with Estyn inspectors.

All IPs and LA PIPs are experienced, high-functioning senior leaders. They undergo a rigorous interview process prior to employment. Working alongside LA officers and LA PIPs, CSC's quality assurance processes have been strengthened, which includes:

- 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 undertake 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 meets 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. These meetings are solution focussed and are valued by LA PIPs.
- LA PIPs quality assure progress review reports written by the IP and then share with relevant HTs, CoGB, HoA and DoE.
- All work undertaken by CSC and external partners in support of RCT schools is now fed directly into the SIPL, this allows SMT and LA officers direct access to the work being undertaken within the school and its impact.

Both LA PIPs, are invited to attend RCT's Education Directorate's Senior Management Team meetings, ensuring officers work collegiately and proactively to support RCT schools. To further strengthen this partnership, LA PIPs and IPs join RCT's Education Directorate officers each term to discuss vulnerable schools as part of the 'All School Review' (ASR) process. Again, these solution focussed meetings are highly valued and ensure schools receive appropriate and timely support.

Example: Primary Improvement Partner (IP) working with a peer IP and Headteacher.

- *An IP supporting a school in the Ferndale cluster 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.*

6.0 SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS

6.1 Schools Receiving Enhanced monitoring

During the 2022-23 academic year, 18 RCT schools were in enhanced monitoring at some stage. 8 schools were in enhanced monitoring across the complete academic year.

During 2022-23, RCT LA and CSC jointly held progress reviews for all of the schools receiving enhanced monitoring. CSC and LA officers agree and set relevant agendas for these meetings, with schools reporting on progress against their SDPs or Post Inspection Action Plans (PIAPs). CSC and LA support for the school is reviewed, evidence is scrutinised, and any necessary additional brokering of support agreed. Progress is agreed, captured via a RAYG system and formal minutes shared. Many schools receiving enhanced monitoring during 2022-23 made good progress.

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

7.0 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.

All CSC PL and support is available at no charge to schools in the region. Details of CSC's professional learning and support available to schools in the region can be found in Appendix A.

In addition, section 11.0 demonstrates the number of RCT practitioners that have taken part in CSC's professional learning opportunities, collaboration projects and shared their practice with the wider region and beyond.

7.1 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 includes of several components that support the self-improving school system. categorised broadly into two areas, namely 'professional learning collaborations' and 'professional learning opportunities', (see Appendix B - 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.

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

This contribution towards the CSWC mode allowed practitioners from RCT schools to share their knowledge (as part of the SLO model) and refine their leadership skills to further enhance their own schools.

7.2 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. During 2022-2023, the total collaboration funded for schools in RCT was £1,382,075.

7.2.1 Clusters

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 all learners.

There are 16 clusters in RCT, excluding special schools and the pupil referral unit (PRU).

Examples of effective cluster working in RCT:

A number of cluster INSET days have been facilitated by the CSC curriculum team, allowing practitioners from across the cluster to deepen their knowledge and understanding of the Curriculum for Wales framework. At one such INSET day arranged to support a secondary school and its cluster of feeder primary schools, CSC 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 Area 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.

7.2.2 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.

Table 2: 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

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.

7.3 Regional and Cross-Regional Professional Learning Opportunities

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

Table 3: Engagement in CSC and Cross-regional Professional Learning

Year	CSC		RCT	
	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 from RCT schools following participation in PL during 2022-2023:

- 95% 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.
- 95% stated that the PL would change their practice, and that they plan to use what they have learned.
- 73% stated that the PL was linked to their school improvement priorities.

7.3.1 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, this included 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 schools in the region. In all bespoke support there is evidence of impact on the provision at either practitioner or leadership level in the receiving school.

7.3.2 Regional and National Funded Collaboration Projects

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

Table 4: 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 RCT Schools focused on national priorities. These included projects related to curriculum design, cross-cutting themes, teaching and all Areas of Learning and Experience.

Table 5: 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

7.4 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 in RCT with the knowledge, experiences, skills and confidence to be effective in their roles.

7.4.1 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 in RCT, aligning to Welsh Government’s Leadership Development Pathway.



Table 6: 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

For the middle leadership programme, all participants are allocated 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.

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. 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 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.

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

System Leaders

The CSC System Leader programme is aimed at experienced headteachers who wish to further develop and support other schools and the wider education system. Seven headteachers from RCT schools, out of 14 across the region, have participated in this pilot programme. 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 a RCT schools, this deployment rate has grown substantially since 22-23.

7.4.2 School Governors

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.

Table 7: Engagement in CSC Professional Learning Sessions for Governors 2022-2023

	Number of governors from RCT schools			
	Middle	Primary	Secondary	Special
Mandatory PL sessions	15	136	21	9
Non-mandatory PL sessions	13	117	26	6

In evaluations completed by governors from RCT schools upon completion of the sessions, the following was stated:

- As a result of engaging with the PL, many (82%) governors stated good or very good knowledge on the topic and 86% stated it would have an impact on their role.
- 84% of governors stated their intention to use the learning from the session in their role.

7.4.3 Regional Leaders of Governance (RLGs)

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, two RLGs were serving governors from schools in RCT. In 2022-2023, one governing body of a school in RCT was supported by an RLG, this has expanded significantly since 2022/23.

7.4.4 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. During 2022-2023, 36 TAs from schools in RCT engaged in the regional TALP programmes. 13 practitioners from RCT successfully completed the Aspiring HLTA programme.

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 three from schools in RCT.

7.4.5 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 and regional PL events and programmes, networking opportunities for both NQTs and the staff working to support them. With the exception of the leadership pathway programmes, NQTs can also engage with all other CSC PL opportunities, support and resources.

Table 8: 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, 79 NQTs from RCT engaged with the programme.

In evaluations completed by RCT NQTs following the Aspire programme, the following was stated:

- 86% rated the programme as fit for purpose in meeting their needs.
- 86% rated the online PL materials for their usefulness in their role.
- 100% said the programme assisted them in making progress towards the Professional Standards for Teaching and Leadership.

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. 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.

16 mentors attended RCT cluster network meetings hosted at Ysgol Nantgwyn. 15 RCT mentors attended the CSC Mentoring Matters Conference, and the mentor from Ysgol Nantgwyn was invited to present their practice at the event.

In July 2023, 80 RCT NQTs passed induction. There were no fails processed.

7.4.6 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.

Table 9: 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 is a train the trainer programme and participants can then deliver the training to others in their school and clusters across CSC.

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

7.5 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.

Table 10: 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 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.

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 97 requests from schools in RCT for bespoke support related to these areas.

7.5.1 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 a detailed reports to RCT LA related to the school's implementation, PL and support.

Roll-out September 2022

All nursery, primary and all-age schools in RCT 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 of 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.

7.5.2 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. 198 delegates from 69 (60%) schools in RCT engaged in LLC PL programmes, events, conferences, assignments, and networks. This included:

Table 11: 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 developed a 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. The following RCT schools are included:

- 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 (see Appendix 2).

Table 12: RCT 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 from RCT schools upon completion of the programmes, the following was stated:

- As a result of engaging with PL focused on LLC, all participants considered that their knowledge had improved in some way.
- 96% 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. (78%).
- Nearly all participants (98%) anticipated the PL would have an impact on learners in their setting, while many participants (78%) felt the PL would have a significant impact on learners in their setting.

7.5.3 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.

55 delegates from 32 (28%) schools in RCT engaged in PL programmes, events, conferences, assignments, and networks.

Table 13: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 from RCT schools upon completion of the PL, the following was stated:

- All delegates reported that PL event improved their knowledge of mathematics and numeracy.
- Many delegates (85%) 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.
- All participants anticipated the PL would have an impact on learners in their setting with 76% expecting a more profound impact, and a majority (62%) 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.

7.5.4 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.

133 delegates from 48 (41%) of schools in RCT engaged in digital learning PL programmes, events, conferences, assignments, and networks.

Table 14: 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 from RCT schools upon completion of the PL, the following was stated:

- Many practitioners (80%) intend to share their PL with colleagues, and a majority (67%) 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 (83%) reported that the PL was appropriate to needs and skill level, and that it was relevant to their daily role (73%).
- Nearly all practitioners (97%) 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.

7.5.5 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
- Welsh Language Professional Learning
- Language, Literacy and Communication (LLC): Cymraeg

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.

Table 15: Siarter Iaith / Siarter Iaith Cymraeg Campus Awards 2022-2023

	Bronze	Silver	Gold
CSC	47	28	8
RCT	14	8	5

During 2022-2023, 66 delegates from 44 (38%) schools in RCT engaged in Welsh development PL programmes, events, conferences, assignments, and networks.

Table 16: 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.

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 from delegates from the RCT schools:

- 3 out of 4 schools stated that they have a clear pathway for developing the Welsh Language, heritage and culture appropriate to their context.
- 4 out of 4 schools graded the degree to which the programme extended their skills and knowledge as 5/5.
- 3 out of 4 schools rated the professional learning as 5/5.
- 3 out of 4 schools 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.

347 delegates from 51 (44%) schools in RCT engaged in Welsh language PL.

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. Of the delegates who completed evaluations following face to face events:

- 100% stated that they plan to use what they have learned.
- 83% stated that the PL enhanced their knowledge of the subject.
- 67% gave 4 or 5, on a scale of 1 to 5, on how confident they felt following the PL.

Table 17: Engagement in CSC Welsh language PL opportunities 2022-2023

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

[LLC: Cymraeg 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.

Table 18: Engagement in CSC LLC Cymraeg PL opportunities 2022-2023

RCT	Regional PL (excl. networks)	Regional networks	Regional funded collaboration projects
No of practitioners	23	17	1
No of schools	18	12	1
% of schools	16%	10%	1%

During 2022-2023, 40 practitioners from 30 (26%) schools in RCT either attended LLC: Cymraeg professional learning or an LLC: Cymraeg network meeting. These included all four (100%) Welsh medium secondary schools in the local authority. Of the delegates who attended professional learning and completed evaluations:

- Nearly all practitioners (96%) stated that they plan to use what they have learned and nearly all (96% reported that the PL would lead to at least some change in their practice.
- Nearly all practitioners (96%) reported that the PL enhanced their knowledge of the subject matter, with all practitioners (100%) giving 4 or 5 on a scale of 1-5, on how confident they felt following the PL.
- Many (83%) reported that the PL was appropriate to needs and skill level, and that it was relevant to their daily role (73%).

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 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.

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 Comprehensive School collaborated to produce exemplified support and guidance for the teaching of Welsh in an English medium context. 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.

7.5.6 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.

7.5.7 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.

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.

Table 19: 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

[Post-16 leaders network](#) continues to be well-attended and supports schools' broader awareness of national and regional priorities in the sector. delegates from 14 delegates from four schools in RCT engaged in this network.

[Welsh Baccaulaureate/Skills Challenge Certificate network](#) meetings were available for all qualification levels. Six delegates from three schools in RCT engaged in this network.

8.0 Equity and Vulnerable Learners

Central South Consortium continues to work in partnership with RCT and other stakeholders to support equity in all schools across the LA, with high standards and aspirations for all. A key driver to this work is the fostering of effective partnership with key stakeholders across RCT 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.

8.1 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?

Autumn 2022, 70% of schools in RCT 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. Three schools from RCT, 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.

8.2 Pupil Development Grant (PDG)

April 2022 – March 2023, the PDG was allocated to schools at a rate of £1,150 per learner based on Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) 2021. For further information, see Appendix A.

All RCT 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, (see Appendix A).

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).

Strong practice 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.

8.3 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. Cardinal Newman RC School and Hawthorn High School have been highlighted to engage in the RADY programme in 2023/24. For further information, see Appendix A.

9.0 CSC CONTRIBUTION TO SUPPORTING LA PRIORITIES

As part of CSC's business planning process, RCT provides CSC with their priorities in the Spring Term, these are built into CSC's business plan for the following academic year. 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)

10.0 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.

10.1 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 RCT and RCT schools, can be found [here](#).

10.2 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.

10.3 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 20: 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 21: 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.*

Following an inspection at a primary school in the Pontypridd area, it needed to respond to Estyn's Inspection recommendation to, " 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.

10.4 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 of recognised indicators of value for money (in relation to the impact of the professional learning offer). A detailed analysis of this can be found in the Annual Academic Report for 2022/2023 which was presented to Joint Committee Members in December 2023. A link to the report can be found [here](#).

11.0 SHARING OF PRACTICE

Sharing of practice



RHONDDA CYNON TAF
Consortium Canolbarth y De
Central South Consortium
Gwasgirthys Addysg a'r Yd
Joint Education Service

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	1
No. of Estyn good practice case studies: Sept 2021 - Sept 2022	3

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

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

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

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

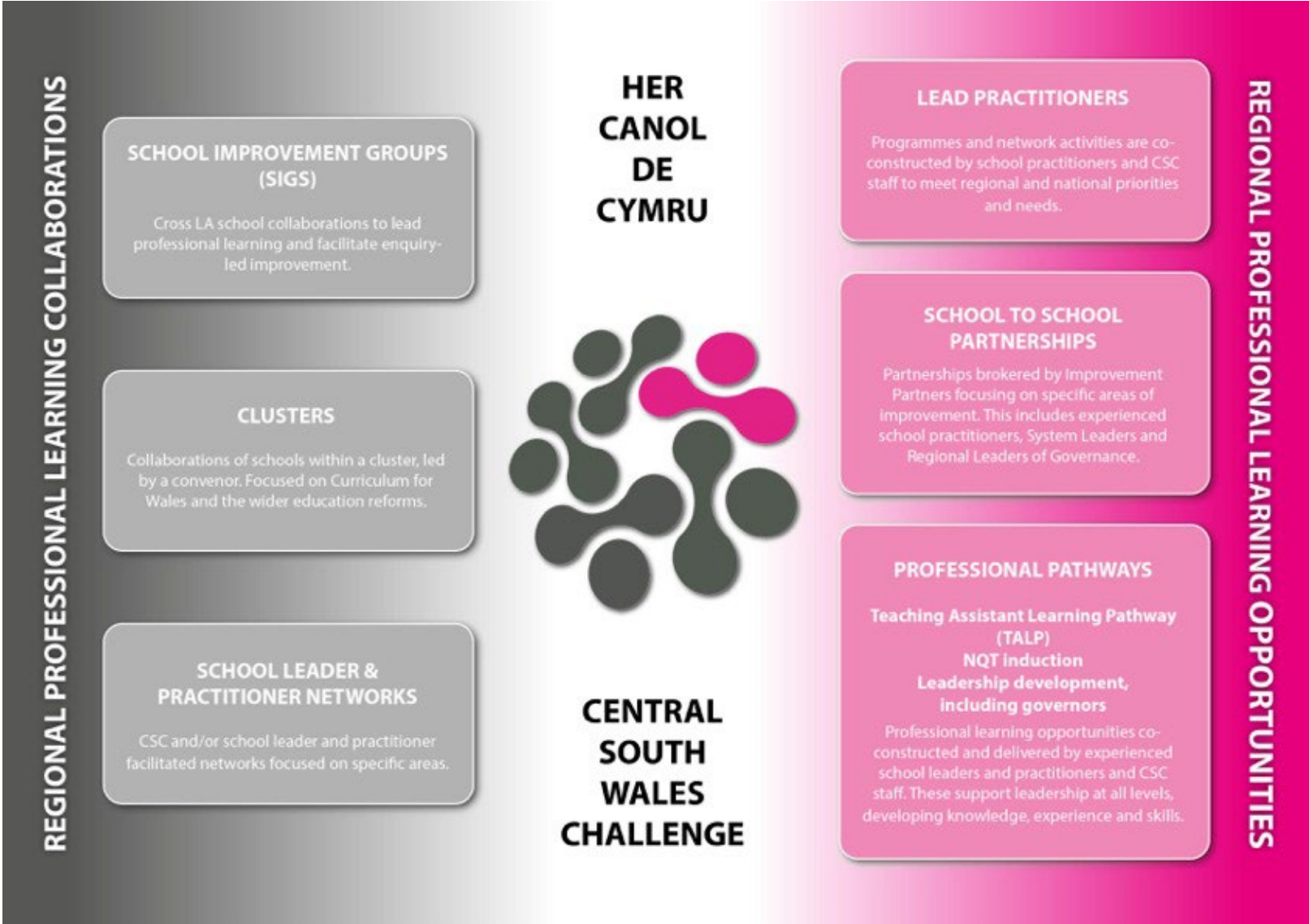
Sharing Practice - Sept 2022 - Sept 2023

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:	
• Dwlw Darllen	4
• Mindful Teaching and Teaching Mindfulness	
• Den y Dreigiau	
• Richard Price Tercentenary Celebration	
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

Central South Wales Challenge 2022-2023



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
<p>Delivering a high quality skilled educational workforce and excellent leadership at all levels</p>	<p>To sharpen self-evaluation and improvement planning to drive improvement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During Autumn term visits, Improvement Partners (IPs) work alongside school leaders to plan and undertake self-evaluation activities. Due to the impact of ASOS, this was in different stages of development across RCT schools. 	<p>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.</p>
	<p>Improve the consistency and quality of delivery plans.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IPs are work with Headteachers, SLT and governing bodies to ensure a shared understanding of progression exists within their own schools. In the best cases they work 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. 	<p>For schools to continue to review and refine their approaches to progression and their shared understanding.</p>
	<p>Ensure effective safeguarding arrangements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is a Local Authority area of responsibility. 	
	<p>Deliver the Strategic Priorities within the WESP.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary – 3 bronze, 9 silver and 5 gold. Secondary – 1 bronze and 1 silver. Siarter Iaith Cymraeg Campus (English Medium) Data – November 2023 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary – 42 bronze, 10 silver and 2 gold. Secondary – 3 bronze and 2 silver. 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 	<p>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.</p>

		<p>or clusters. All asynchronous assignments have been revised and updated and a higher level (Gloywi laith) introduced as an assignment and face to face event.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 through 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. 	
	<p>Ensuring effective leadership and management arrangements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	<p>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.</p>

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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. <p>RCT schools’ engagement in Curriculum, Teaching and Assessment PL opportunities April 2023- October 2023</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Regional PL (excl. networks)</th> <th>Regional Networks</th> <th>Regional Funded Projects</th> <th>Bespoke Support Requests</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Practitioners</td> <td>328</td> <td>205</td> <td>114</td> <td>x</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Schools</td> <td>102</td> <td>77</td> <td>76</td> <td>70</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> IPs support Headteachers and senior leaders quality assure the school’s self-evaluation processes and its impact. 		Regional PL (excl. networks)	Regional Networks	Regional Funded Projects	Bespoke Support Requests	Practitioners	328	205	114	x	Schools	102	77	76	70
	Regional PL (excl. networks)	Regional Networks	Regional Funded Projects	Bespoke Support Requests													
Practitioners	328	205	114	x													
Schools	102	77	76	70													

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	
--	--	--	--

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake twilight session with Cardinal Newman - October 2023 • Establish links with other RCT schools to provide support.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	
	Ensure approaches relating to children’s rights are embedded across all schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See above
	Ensure there are robust approaches to enhancing learner wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See above

Strategic Priority 5:		21 st 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	

This page is intentionally left blank



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2023-24

EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

13TH MARCH 2024

UNIVERSAL PRIMARY FREE SCHOOL MEALS

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES

Author(s): Andrea Richards, Service Director of 21st Century Schools and Transformation
Lisa Kidner, Business Manager, Catering Services

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Scrutiny on the roll-out of Universal Primary Free School Meals (UPFSM) in Rhondda Cynon Taf. The report considers how we have utilised Welsh Government funding to support this initiative.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Acknowledge the contents of the report and note the impact of the introduction of Universal Primary Free School Meals as well as next steps.
- 2.2 Consider whether there are any aspects of the report that the Committee wish to scrutinise in greater depth.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Universal Primary Free School Meal policy is part of the Co-operation Agreement between the Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru, which will see free school meals extended to all primary school pupils over a three-year period.
- 3.2 The commitment is in response to the rising cost-of-living pressure on families and the shared ambition of tackling child poverty and ensuring no child goes hungry in school.
- 3.3 This ambition is informed by Welsh Government's understanding that younger children are more likely to be living in relative income poverty. The commitment represents a transformational intervention and an important further step to tackling

child poverty and ensuring that children have at least one meal every school day. This is crucial in the current context of the increasing cost of living.

- 3.4 There are also wider benefits of free school meals, including promoting healthy eating across the school, reducing health inequalities, increasing the variety of food our young learners can eat, improving social skills at mealtimes, as well as improving behaviour and attainment.

The policy also supports Welsh Government’s aim of supporting local, sustainable food production, increasing the supply of Welsh food onto the school plate, and helping to strengthen Wales’s Foundational Economy.

- 3.5 Welsh Government require the rollout to be delivered in a phased approach, which started in September 2022 with reception pupils, with the offer being extended to years 1 and 2 no later than the start of the summer term, April 2023. The roll out to older age groups is to be completed by September 2024.

- 3.6 Phased implementation of the offer is needed as all school catering facilities are different. Some primary schools need time to prepare and arrange the advance work needed to build catering capacity. Work is continuing in a few remaining primary schools so that kitchens can cater for a significant greater number of children to receive school meals.

- 3.7 The Council has received funding from Welsh Government to facilitate the roll-out of Universal Primary Free School Meals, as detailed in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Welsh Government Universal Primary Free School Meal Funding					
	2021/22 (£)	2022/23 (£)	2023/24 (£)	2024/25 (£)	Total (£)
Revenue Funding	94,423	1,767,061	2,773,903	TBC	4,635,387
Capital Funding	2,026,096	2,836,535	2,470,000	360,000	7,692,631
Total	2,120,519	4,603,596	5,243,903	360,000	12,328,018

- 3.8 The Welsh Government 2022/23 revenue allocation used PLASC 21 data and was based on expansion numbers, 190 school days per year, £2.90 meal unit rate and 86% uptake. Claims are demand led. It also included a 6% fixed value administration fee. The 2022/23 capital allocation was based on pupil numbers for the ages 3 to 18 and the number of schools in 2020. The funding was apportioned by pupil numbers (70%) and school numbers (30%). This calculated an amount per school and per pupil, which has been applied to the number of pupils and schools in RCT.

- 3.9 The Welsh Government 2023/24 revenue allocation is based on the data detailed in 3.8, however, Welsh Government completed a meal unit rate review during 2023/24 and increased the meal unit rate to £3.20, with effect from 1st January 2024. Backdated additional revenue funding of £206,587, for the period April 2023 to December 2023, was received in January 2024. Capital funding was only allocated for 2021/22 and 2022/23. However, additional capital funding of £2,830,000 was awarded in 2023/24 (of which £360,000 was profiled into 2024/25) following the submission of a capital bid to Welsh Government.

3.10 In its draft 2024/25 settlement issued 20th December 2023, Welsh Government indicated continued revenue grant funding of £93.5M on an all-Wales basis aligned to its ambitious UPFSM roll out programme for 2024/25.

3.11 Within Rhondda Cynon Taf, the Council programme of rolling out Universal Free School Meals is as follows:

- from 5th September 2022, all reception aged pupils have been offered a Universal Primary Free School Meal
- from January 2023, the offer has been extended to include year 1 pupils and eligible nursery pupils
- from April 2023, the offer has been extended to include year 2 pupils and eligible nursery pupils
- from September 2023, the offer has been extended to include year 3 and 4 pupils and eligible nursery pupils
- From January 2024, the offer has been extended to include eligible nursery pupils
- from April 2024, the offer will be extended to year 5 & 6 pupils and eligible nursery pupils
- From September 2024, the offer will be extended to eligible nursery pupils.

3.12 Eligible nursery pupils are those who attend local authority nursery provision on a full-time basis (morning and afternoon sessions) in accordance with the Council's admissions policy:

- All pupils aged 4 years, between 1st September 2022 and 31st December 2022, will be eligible for a free school meal from January 2023.
- All pupils aged 4 years, between 1st January 2023 and 31st March 2023, will be eligible for a free school meal from April 2023.
- All pupils aged 4 years, between 1st April 2023 and 31st August 2023, will be eligible for a free school meal from September 2023.
- All pupils aged 4 years, between 1st September 2023 and 31st December 2023, will be eligible for a free school meal from January 2024.
- All pupils aged 4 years, between 1st January 2024 and 31st March 2024, will be eligible for a free school meal from April 2024.
- All pupils aged 4 years, between 1st April 2024 and 31st August 2024, will be eligible for a free school meal from September 2024.

Some schools do offer, and directly fund, a full-time nursery place from their own school budget; in this case, pupils are not eligible to receive a Universal Primary Free School Meal as per Welsh Government grant conditions.

3.13 Rollout of the offer has been challenging and is highly dependent on being able to fully staff the offer and comply with all the relevant health and safety and legislative requirements.

4. CURRENT POSITION OF UNIVERSAL PRIMARY FREE SCHOOL MEALS

4.1 The Council has successfully rolled out Universal Primary Free School Meals to all eligible nursery pupils, reception pupils and years 1 to 4 pupils.

4.2 Table 2 below summarises the average percentage uptake of Universal Primary Free School Meals for the 2023 autumn term, by school year group (no nursery age pupils were eligible in the autumn term).

Week Commencing	Reception %	Year 1 %	Year 2 %	Year 3 %	Year 4 %
22/09/2023	59.0	62.6	60.1	60.5	59.2
20/10/2023	63.3	65.8	64.5	65.7	64.3
17/11/2023	64.6	66.7	65.8	65.3	64.3
15/12/2023	61.5	65.7	63.8	65.0	63.6

4.3 To encourage take up of the offer, the Education Catering Service has utilised Welsh Government marketing resources, to generate a visible presence on social media channels and other digital platforms, the RCT Communications Team has delivered a school meals marketing campaign. Promotion of Universal Primary Free School Meals for eligible year groups, and encouragement of applications for those eligible for eFSM and Schools Essential Grants, remain the current focus. Primary schools have reinforced the campaign by sharing communications with parents/carers.

4.4 Currently, additional catering staff costs of £0.417M are projected since the roll out started in September 2022 to January 2024. It is anticipated that these additional costs will increase as recruitment continues to progress. In addition, central catering, accountancy, and data staff costs of £0.125M are projected, totalling £0.542M.

4.5 In house technical officer from Corporate Estates and Catering Services continue to project manage the capital works. To date work has been completed in 63 schools and the remaining 38 schools are programmed for completion by September 2024. The majority of the outstanding works are electrical upgrades.

4.6 The rollout of Universal Primary Free School Meals has resulted in an increase in the requests for medically prescribed diets. Daily, Catering Services currently prepares and serves 383 such meals (with 87 different combinations) to primary age pupils. The current trend indicates that demand for such menus will continue to increase as the offer is extended to older year groups. To qualify for a medically prescribed diet, the request must be supported by appropriate medical evidence.

4.7 Monthly revenue grant claims continue to be submitted to Welsh Government using a business intelligence tool called PowerBI. The software provides management information such as trend analysis, which can be used to target schools with low take up levels as well as being the core source of information for grant claims.

4.8 The Council's Digital Improvement Office continue to support Catering Services through the delivery of a bespoke package of IT Solutions. Every school kitchen

uses a digital device to access Microsoft Teams, emails and other digital platforms, improving communication and collaboration opportunities.

- 4.9 All the food and drink provided in maintained schools must meet the Health Eating in Schools (Nutritional Standards and Requirements) (Wales) Regulations 2013 ('Regulations'). These Regulations are based on the previous Appetite for Life guidelines and form part of the wider Healthy Eating in Schools (Wales) Measure 2009 ('Measure').

A choice of two hot main meals is offered daily, including a vegetarian option, and cold alternatives are available to extend the variety and menu choice, i.e. salads and filled rolls with salad. The variety on offer is influenced by supply availability, price, permitted cooking processes/equipment and acceptance by pupils. Menus were reviewed and changed at the end of summer 2023, as opposed to the traditional start of the September term, to ensure that the appropriate supplies could be procured in sufficient quantities and catering staff were familiar with the provision. Medically prescribed menus are re-created every time the menu changes and the current menu has been created with the aim of mitigating the risk of error.

The school lunch aims to provide a nutritional balance with vegetables and carbohydrates in specific portion sizes, alongside appropriate protein and dairy items. Despite positive reinforcement at the service point, and through the school curriculum, many children will resist the uptake or waste the elements of the meal that are most beneficial in terms of health and wellbeing. Where this happens, or the child does not like any of the choices on the menu, it will have a negative impact on the uptake of the Universal Primary Free School Meal and a packed lunch may be provided by the parent/carer. Schools continue to encourage parents to provide a 'healthy' packed lunch.

5. CHALLENGES OF ROLLING OUT UNIVERSAL PRIMARY FREE SCHOOL MEALS

- 5.1 The roll out of Universal Primary Free School Meals has not been without challenge; while mitigation is being sought at every stage, Catering Services continue to experience challenges such as:-

- 5.1.1 **Staffing** – the recruitment and retention of catering staff has proved difficult and service delivery has been impacted by staff sickness, vacant posts, and the inability to recruit staff. The service is working closely with Human Resources and Communication colleagues to create recruit staff and this work continues with campaigns, job fairs, etc. A staffing agency has been engaged to recruit catering staff and in particular areas, where recruitment is an issue, primary schools have shared recruitment information directly with parents/carers.

To attract more applicants to apply for jobs, Catering Services has collaborated with Human Resources to simplify the application form/process and explore new ways of advertising posts, such as on various social media platforms and meet regularly with them to streamline the process. An ongoing advert for casual general kitchen assistants is on the Council's website and regular interview days have been held. As the rollout of UPFSM continues to increase the demand for school meals, there is a real risk that contingency plans may need to be implemented to ensure service continuity to the existing level of pupils. If not resolved, staffing deficits provide a potential threat to the plans to final roll out the UPFSM offer to years 5 and 6.

5.1.2 **Capital Works** – at the outset of the roll out of the offer and anticipating approval of the Universal Primary Free School Meal initiative by Welsh Government, Catering Services engaged early with relevant parties, including Corporate Estates, Procurement and catering equipment suppliers. Equipment has been delivered and installed but some other installations have been delayed due to long delivery lead-in times or because it has been dependant on the completion of capital works. Several school sites also need electrical upgrades before any additional equipment can be installed.

Receiving tenders for some building and adaptation works continues to be challenging together with, increasing material and labour costs are also constraining the budget.

5.1.3 **Medically Prescribed Diets** – the process of tailoring a menu to support a medically prescribed dietary requirement is complex and intricate detail and attention is required. While food manufacturers are obliged to ‘declare’ 14 specific ingredients, recognised as common allergens, dietary requests are becoming increasingly complex with many requiring more than one ingredient to be absent/restricted from the meal. Furthermore, carbohydrate counting for diabetic diets, and other conditions, are increasing in demand. Some pupils will have food allergies based on ingredient consumption only, whereas others may be more sensitive to ingredients in the environment. If the allergy in question does not form a part of the 14 mandatory allergens, each product specification must be scrutinised individually. Some allergens are represented in product specification by common name, whereas others may be known by formulary names, which may be recognised by a person who has studied high level dietetics but not necessarily a person who has less knowledge and experience. Dieticians’ advice is sought for some complex diets, but their availability to support is low. With demand and complexity increasing, the service will need the full-time support of an expert in this field.

5.1.4 **Product Availability/Substitution** - the food supply chain has become increasingly volatile with popular products becoming unavailable with no warning. Some product non-availability is short-term whereas others are permanent. The service has had to accept 45 substitutions since January 2022 (others have been declined with existing menu items being repeated to account for the shortage, but this method runs a risk of conflicting with the Food Based Standards as determined by Healthy Eating in Maintained Schools). Additionally, food prices are rising sharply and whilst the Council’s Procurement team work hard to ensure contractual compliance, the current global position has taken away some of the previously held influence. Historically, price increases would have been anticipated and could be carried until the next menu change but when products are now rising by up to 35%, given the volume of purchases, the service has no choice but to source an alternative product. These situations present major challenges, and while every effort is made to source representative products, this is not always possible, and the impact on menus, parent/guardian/pupil expectations and special diets must be managed.

5.1.5 **Funding Constraints** – revenue funding has been received for 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24. In its draft 2024/25 settlement issued 20th December 2023, Welsh Government indicated continued revenue grant funding on an all-Wales basis aligned to its ambitious UPFSM roll out programme for 2024/25.

Capital funding has been received in 2021/22 and 2022/23 and there was no third year of funding. However, a bid for additional capital funding for 2023/24 was submitted to Welsh Government and subsequently approved. A further capital bid was submitted in February 2024. If this bid is unsuccessful, then the works will have to be funded by the Council.

5.1.6 **Managing Parents/Guardians Expectations** – by September 2024, every primary school pupil in Wales will be entitled to receive a Universal Primary Free School meal. Welsh Government recognised that the delivery challenges would differ for each local authority and, as such, allowed each one to set their own phased rollout timetable. Although early media messages did not commit each local authority to immediate delivery for all year groups, some parents/guardians expected their child(ren) to be fed immediately under the initiative.

5.1.7 **Meal Sittings** - extra sittings and/or time are needed to facilitate increased uptake in meals. The seating capacity within many dining facilities cannot be increased and, in some sites, those in receipt of a packed lunch may have to consume their food in alternative areas within the school, which would not be suitable for a seated lunch service. Furthermore, the actual service of food takes longer with more pupils, and in younger age groups, the consumption of the food is far slower. All these factors will impact on the next sitting; food needs to be cooked in batches to optimise quality, tables need to be sanitised in between use and pupils need to be supervised. The result is not only increased time required for catering staff but also for the supervisory staff provided by the school.

5.1.8 **Staff Training** - every member of Catering staff is required to undertake a minimum amount of mandatory training in Health and Safety, food safety and Council induction subjects such as Safeguarding and Level 1 Welsh Language skills.

5.2 **Risks Associated with Reduced Applications for Free School Meals**

5.2.1 The number of children eligible for Free School Meals (eFSM) has a direct impact upon Welsh Government core funding of Revenue Support Grant (RSG). eFSM numbers also drive Pupil Development Grant (PDG) received by schools and has also been a factor in other grant distributions. It is therefore important that as a local authority we continue to encourage families to apply to be eligible for free school meals despite being provided with a Universal Free School Meal. To be eligible for an annual payment for PDG Access, families are required to meet the eligibility criteria for free school meals. To minimise the risk of reduced funding, the Catering Service together with Finance colleagues have engaged the Council's social media team to publicise the benefits of continuing to be apply for FSMs even if the learners in the family are in receipt of a UPFSM.

5.3 **Next Steps**

5.3.1 The next phase of the rollout will conclude in April 2024, when the offer will be extended to years 5 and 6 and eligible nursery pupils.

5.3.2 Staffing requirements will be reviewed in line with increases in meals numbers and a rolling programme of recruitment will continue to be undertaken.

5.3.3 Further orders will be placed for kitchen equipment and electrical upgrades. Tenders to be issued for larger capital works for the remaining schools, the majority of which will be undertaken in the summer holidays of 2024.

5.3.4 Dietician to be appointed to manage the increase and complexity of medically prescribed dietary requests and assist with training and education.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

6.1 There are no negative or adverse equality or diversity implications associated with this report.

7. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no negative or adverse Welsh language implications associated with this report.

8. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

8.1 There are no consultation implications aligned to this report.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 As the number of pupils receiving a Universal Primary Free School Meal increase, primary schools will need to provide extra supervisory staff to cover mealtimes. Volumes of meal ingredients will also increase. It is currently assumed that additional costs are met in full by Welsh Government funding. The Catering Services, supported by Finance officers, will continue to monitor this position.

9.2 Additional Catering staff have been recruited and employed to facilitate the roll-out and this will continue until all primary age pupils are in receipt of a Universal Primary Free School Meal.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

10.1 On 1st October 2021, Natasha's Law came into effect, obliging all caterers and manufacturers to consider whether the food they provided was recognised as Preprepared for Direct Sale (PPDS) and to comply with the appropriate allergen labelling, as determined within the legislation.

Other legislative measures which are adhered to during the school lunch provision include: -

- Retained Regulation (EC) No 852/2004
- Food Hygiene (Wales) Regulations 2006
- Food Hygiene Rating (Wales) Act 2013
- Health & Safety at Work etc Act 1974.

All of the above, are measured for compliance when kitchen inspections are conducted by the Environmental Health Team (Public Health, Protection and Community Services).

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

- 11.1 The Council's Corporate Plan 2020–2024 highlights the Council's commitment to delivering three main priorities, namely:
- Ensuring People: are independent, healthy and successful;
 - Creating Places: where people are proud to live, work and play;
 - Enabling Prosperity: creating the opportunity for people and businesses to be innovative; be entrepreneurial; and fulfil their potential and prosper.
- 11.2 This report is linked to ensuring that the rollout of Universal Primary Free School Meals supports children to be independent, healthy and successful by receiving a free healthy and nutritional lunch.
- 11.3 Due regard has been made to all seven well-being goals and the Five Ways of Working, as contained in the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, which requires the Council to think about the long-term impact of decisions, on communities to prevent consistent issues such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change. Universal Primary Free School Meals contributes to achieving the wellbeing goals by:
- Assisting towards a healthier Wales by allowing pupils to access a free healthy lunch.
 - Ensuring the pupils with dietary requirements are treated equally and have access to a lunch provision.
 - Assisting parents to achieve a more prosperous Wales by saving them money.

12. CONCLUSION

- 12.1 The Council has successfully rolled out Universal Primary Free School Meals to all reception age pupils, years 1 to 4 and eligible nursery pupils. The offer has been extended to year 5 and 6 pupils and eligible nursery pupils from April 2024, which will conclude the roll-out.
- 12.2 The rollout will continue to be a key priority for the Council to ensure that all primary children receive the offer within the timescales set-out by Welsh Government, whilst maximising the grant funding and complying with its terms and conditions.
- 12.3 There are several challenges associated with the roll out of Universal Primary Free school Meals and the Catering Service will continue to work with internal departments and Welsh Government to mitigate risks and effectively manage the offer.

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
13TH MARCH 2024
UNIVERSAL PRIMARY FREE SCHOOL MEALS
REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
AND INCLUSION SERVICES

Author(s): Andrea Richards, Service Director of 21st Century Schools and Transformation
Lisa Kidner, Business Manager, Catering Services



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2023-24

EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

13TH MARCH 2024

OVERVIEW OF THE POST 16 OFFER

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES

Author: Kate Owen, 14-19 Future Pathways Officer

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Members with an overview of the Post 16 curriculum offer across RCT Secondary and Through Schools.
- 1.2 To provide an update on the The Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Act which became law on the 8th September 2022.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Scrutinise and comment on the information contained within this report.
- 2.2 Consider if any further information is required.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To raise Members' awareness.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 In 2016, the Hazelkorn review identified several challenges to the Post Compulsory Education and Training (PCET) sector in Wales. These were the increasing competition from within Wales and internationally, insufficient collaboration and duplication of roles, a lack of coherent learning pathways and educational opportunities, and inadequate employment opportunities. In many cases these have been amplified by Brexit, climate change, Covid-19, an aging population, digital transformation, and economic and social inequality. It recommended that Welsh Government (WG) develop an overarching vision and create an arms-length body to regulate and have authority over the whole PCET sector. This body is the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (CTER) when it is created later this year.

4.2 The Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Act became law on 8th September 2022. It established the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research, a new WG sponsored body, which will dissolve the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) once operational.

4.3 An update on the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research from The Minister for Education in January 2024 stated:

“The Commission for Tertiary Education and Research was established in September 2023 following the appointment of the Board and Simon Pirotte as Chief Executive.

In April 2024, the Commission will commence work on the development of its first strategic plan and start preparations for the introduction of a new tertiary education regulatory system. The Commission will also move into their new headquarters in Capital Quarter; kickstart recruitment activity; **and assume responsibility for their financial and operating systems.**

A phased approach to legislative implementation with the transfer of powers to the Commission now taking place on **1st August 2024**. The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales will continue to exercise its full regulatory and funding functions until it is dissolved at this time.”

4.4 Updated factsheets [Commission for Tertiary Education and Research factsheets | GOV.WALES](#) give further guidance on maintained schools with sixth forms that includes:

- The Commission will have a statutory duty to secure, fund and plan the proper facilities for further education and training of learners aged 16 to 19, including those in maintained school sixth forms.
- This includes having regard to delivery through the medium of Welsh and to those learners with additional learning needs in mainstream settings.
- The Commission will have a role to play in assessing the sufficiency of facilities for ALN provision at a general population (not individual learner) level.
- Funding to support maintained school sixth form provision will be allocated by the Commission via local authorities.

4.5 Notably the updated factsheet also states:

- The Commission will be required to form a local curriculum offer and be involved in the planning and monitoring of post 16 provision across further education and training including school sixth forms.
- The post 16 reforms aim to build on and support the broader principles and key purposes of Curriculum for Wales and support integrity of the wider school system.

- The Commission will also have a role in providing a seamless and well-informed approach to transition and career pathways for learners entering post 16 education and training.
 - As with the reforms to the school curriculum, the sector will be supported to help learners grow as engaged and enterprising citizens, contributing to national and individual prosperity and well-being.
- 4.6 Currently Qualifications Wales have not included A and AS Level qualification in their Made for Wales qualification changes, <https://qualificationswales.org/regulation-reform/reforming/qualified-for-the-future/the-full-14-16-offer/>, that align GCSE qualifications available to learners in Wales to the National Curriculum for Wales. They have however introduced The Advanced Skills Baccalaureate.
- 4.7 The Advanced Skills Baccalaureate Wales, a Level 3 qualification which supports learners to become effective, responsible, and active citizens ready to take their place in a sustainable global society and in the workplace. This new qualification began first teaching in September 2023, with first certification due in summer 2025. This new qualification is a direct replacement for the Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate.
<https://qualificationswales.org/information-support/qualifications-available-in-wales/advanced-skills-baccalaureate-wales/>

5. CURRENT CURRICULUM OFFER IN RCT UPDATE / CURRENT POSITION

- 5.1 There are currently 7 local area curricula operational in RCT. The consortia arrangements are as follows: the Cynon Valley consortium (Aberdare Community School, St. John Baptist CIW School and Mountain Ash Comprehensive), Bryncelynog and Y Pant, Ysgol Llanhari and Ysgol Llangynwyd (Bridgend). There are a small number of learners who study between Ysgol Garth Olwg and Ysgol Cwm Rhondda, but the remaining schools largely operate independently.
- 5.2 The current learner numbers on roll in comparison to 2023 remain static. A drop in numbers on roll at some schools will impact on school budgets (see Appendix 1).
- 5.3 Data for Hawthorn and Pontypridd High schools has not been included as they no longer accept new learners into their sixth form.
- 5.4 Data collated from the school census data in May 2023, shows subjects available and numbers of learners at that time. This shows that at AS Level mathematics and English literature continue to be the most popular, with over 200 learners studying these subjects during the last academic year. Biology, criminology and psychology were the most popular A Level choices (see Appendix 2).
- 5.5 The courses available at each school are summarised below. All schools report there is likely to be little change in their offer in 2024/25.

	Cynon Valley Consortium	Bryncelynog and Y Pant	Tonrefail School	Teorchy Comprehensive	Ysgol Gyfun Garth Olwg	Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda	Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun	Ysgol Llanhari a Llangynwyd
Accounting						Y		
Applied Science		Y	Y			Y		
Art and Design	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Biology	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Business Studies	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Chemistry	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Computer Science		Y	Y	Y				
Criminology	Y	Y	Y	Y				
Cymraeg	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Dance				Y				
Design Technology	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Digital Media							Y	
Drama and Theatre Studies	Y	Y		Y	Y		Y	
Economics			Y	Y				
Engineering	Y			Y				
English Literature	Y	Y	Y	Y				
English Lang and Literature			Y					
English Language					Y	Y	Y	Y
Film Studies			Y					
French	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y		
Further Maths	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	
Geography	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Government and Politics		Y		Y				
Health and Social Care		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
History	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Information Technology	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Law		Y	Y					
Mathematics	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Media Studies		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		
Medical Science		Y	Y	Y	Y		Y	
Music	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y		
Music Technology	Y							
Performing Arts			Y	Y		Y		
Photography	Y	Y			Y	Y	Y	
Physical Education	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

	Cynon Valley Consortium	Bryncelynog and Y Pant	Tonyrefail School	Teorchy Comprehensive	Ysgol Gyfun Garth Olwg	Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda	Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun	Ysgol Llanhari a Llangynrwyd
Physics	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y
Product Design							Y	Y
Psychology	Y	Y	Y	Y			Y	Y
Public Services		Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Religion, Philosophy and Ethics								
Religious Studies	Y	Y	Y		Y		Y	Y
Skills Challenge Certificate (WBQA)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Sociology		Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y
Spanish		Y	Y	Y				
Sport Studies	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y	
Supporting Teaching and Learning (WBL)	Y		Y	Y				
Textiles	Y				Y			
Travel and Tourism		Y		Y				
Total	27	33	33	34	26	25	25	19

6. A / AS RESULTS 2022/23

- 6.1 The A Level results for Wales show that 34% of students achieved A*-A grades – RCT is 8.2 percentage points (pp) below this. This gap is slightly larger than the gap between RCT and Wales in 2019 (7.9 pp) RCT (2019) = 19.1%; Wales (2019) = 27.0% - but the growth in RCT when compared to 2019 is strong.
- 6.2 The A Level results for Wales show that 78.9% of students achieved A*-C grades – RCT is 6.5 percentage points (pp) below this. This gap is larger than the gap between RCT and Wales in 2019 (6.0 pp) RCT (2019) = 70.3%; Wales (2019) = 76.3% - implying a larger growth in Wales.
- 6.3 The A Level results for Wales show that 97.5% of students achieved A*-E grades – RCT is 0.8 percentage points (pp) below this. However, this gap is smaller than the gap between RCT and Wales in 2019 (1.5 pp). RCT (2019) = 96.1%; Wales (2019) = 97.6% - implying a larger growth in RCT than across Wales.

It must be noted that HHS and PHS had closing cohorts in years 13 at their school during the examination session 2023.

- 6.4 The AS Level results for Wales show that 90.9% of students achieved A*-E grades – RCT is 1.8 percentage points (pp) below this. However, this gap is smaller than

the gap between RCT and Wales in 2019 (4.1 pp). RCT (2019) = 85.9%; Wales (2019) = 90.0% - implying a larger growth in RCT than across Wales.

6.5 The AS Level results for Wales show that 65.2% of students achieved A*-C grades – RCT is 4.9 percentage points (pp) below this. However, this gap is smaller than the gap between RCT and Wales in 2019 (7.7 pp). RCT (2019) = 54.3%; Wales (2019) = 62.0% - implying a larger growth in RCT than across Wales.

6.6 The AS Level results for Wales show that 25.5% of students achieved A grades – RCT is 5.3 percentage points (pp) below this. However, this gap is smaller than the gap between RCT and Wales in 2019 (6.6 pp). RCT (2019) = 13.7%; Wales (2019) = 20.3% - implying a larger growth in RCT than across Wales.

7. DESTINATIONS

7.1 As a result of the examination series in the summer of 2023, 63% of RCT school leavers in year 13 are now accessing higher education, 14% have continued their education through other means such as college and/or apprenticeship and 0.02% have been deemed to be NEET.

8. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

8.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not currently required - the contents of the report are for information purposes only.

9. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no Welsh language implications arising from this report.

10. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

10.1 There are no consultation implications aligned to this report.

11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report. However, it should be noted that if numbers on roll fall in the post 16 provisions across the schools, this will affect the funding awarded by CTER.

12. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

12.1 There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report at this time.

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

13.1 This is an information report presenting the overview of the legislation changes to transition arrangements across schools in line with the development of the CfW. However, this report is clearly connected to two of the priorities in the Council's corporate plan 2020- 2024 that is:

- Ensuring **People**: are independent, healthy and successful.

- Within this priority, one of the Council's commitments is to ensure it has *"Improving services for children and young people and ensuring the needs of children are considered in everything we do."*

13.2 There are links to RCTCBC's Education and Inclusion Services Strategic Plan for 2022 to 2025 and its mission: *'To deliver equity and excellence in Education and enhanced well-being for all'*.

There is a connect to Strategic Priority 2 – Supporting educational settings to deliver a transformational curriculum, high quality teaching and learning and improved outcomes for all.

14. CONCLUSION

- 14.1 It is hoped that the Education and Inclusion Scrutiny Committee consider themselves to be well informed and have a clear understanding of the Post 16 curriculum offer across RCT Secondary and Through Schools. The 14-19 Future Pathways Officer is currently visiting all schools with 6th forms to review the provision on offer. This is including discussions with staff and learners and gaining information on extra curriculum opportunities.
- 14.2 Information on the Post 16 curriculum offer across RCT Secondary and Through schools is available to view on <https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/en/home> <https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/SchoolsandLearning/Pathwaysatpost16/PathwaysatPost16.aspx>. This section of the website provides information on the application process and transport arrangements as well as links to individual schools.
- 14.3 The 14-19 Future Pathways Officer is collaborating with Qualifications Wales to stay up to date with the development of new Made for Wales qualifications and has contributed to the ongoing consultation meetings.
- 14.4 The 14-19 Pathways Officer has taken up post as a board member on the Governing Body of Coleg Y Cymoedd and also sits on their Curriculum and Quality Committee. This has afforded further insight into the development of the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research and will support transition to this model for 6th form provision in RCT.
- 14.5 The current curriculum offer for post 16 learners is broad with 112 subjects on offer, plus the Challenge Skills Certificates. The 14-19 Future Pathways Officer has begun work assessing information from The Careers Wales Labour Market annual bulletin to the RCT Post 16 curriculum offer. This will support decision making on future subject offer. [Careers Wales LMI Bulletin September 2023 \(gov.wales\)](#)

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
13TH MARCH 2024
OVERVIEW OF THE POST 16 OFFER
REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
AND INCLUSION SERVICES

Author: Kate Owen, 14-19 Future Pathways Officer

	Numbers on roll 1st February 2023	Numbers on roll 1st February 2024
Aberdare Community	126	153
Bryncelynnog Comprehensive	178	182
Mountain Ash Comprehensive	80	82
St. John Baptist CiW	167	161
Tonyrefail Community	284	317
Treorchy Comprehensive	300	284
Y Pant Comprehensive	246	264
Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda	108	99
Ysgol Gyfun Garth Olwg	133	101
Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun	133	118
Ysgol Llanhari	67	73
Total	1822	1834

Appendix 2

	Subject	Number of learners across RCT studying this subject
1	Skills Challenge Cert (GCEAS)	1047
2	Skills Challenge Cert (GCEA)	917
3	Mathematics(GCEAS)	250
4	English Lit (GCEAS)	205
5	Biology (GCEA)	195
6	Biology (GCEAS)	195
7	Psychology (GCEAS)	184
8	Criminology (GCEA)	176
9	Criminology (GCEAS)	174
10	Chemistry (GCEAS)	168
11	Psychology (GCEA)	165
12	History (GCEAS)	159
13	Mathematics(GCEA)	156
14	History (GCEA)	142
15	Physics (GCEAS)	133
16	Business Studies (GCEAS)	119
17	Chemistry (GCEA)	119
18	English Lit (GCEA)	119
19	Art & Design (GCEAS)	104
20	Geography (GCEA)	101
21	Geography (GCEAS)	99
22	Physics (GCEA)	95
23	Medical Science (BTSd3)	93
24	Sociology (GCEAS)	89
25	Art & Design (GCEA)	88
26	Sport & Leisure (BTDi3)	87
27	Sociology (GCEA)	84
28	Business Studies (GCEA)	79
29	Physical Education (GCEA)	75
30	Public Services (BTSd3)	75
31	Religious Studies (GCEAS)	72
32	Health S.Care (BTDi3)	68
33	Media Studies (GCEA)	68
34	Physical Education (GCEAS)	68
35	Design Tech (GCEAS)	63
36	Media Studies (GCEAS)	60
37	Info Tech (GCEAS)	58
38	Business Studies (BTCe3)	54
39	Design Tech (GCEA)	52
40	Health & Social (GCEA)	51
41	Health & Social (GCEAS)	51
42	Religious Studies (GCEA)	49

	Subject	Number of learners across RCT studying this subject
43	Applied Science (BTSd3)	47
44	Drama (GCEAS)	76
45	Info Tech (GCEA)	43
46	Computing (BTSd3)	42
47	Computing (BTCe3)	41
48	Computing (GCEA)	41
49	Further Maths (GCEA)	41
50	Drama (GCEA)	38
51	Sports Studies (BTNEC)	38
52	Further Maths (GCEAS)	37
53	ICT (CTID3)	37
54	Criminology (BTSd3)	35
55	Sports Studies (GCEAS)	35
56	Computing(GCEAS)	31
57	Welsh (GCEAS)	31
58	Public Services (BTDi2)	29
59	Welsh (GCEA)	29
60	ICT (BTDi3)	28
62	ICT (BTSd3)	28
63	ICT (BTCe3)	27
64	Retail Business (BTSd3)	27
65	Music (GCEAS)	24
66	Photography (GCEA)	24
67	Photography (GCEAS)	24
68	Pure Maths. (GCEAS)	24
69	Engineering (BTDi3)	22
70	Supporting Teaching and Learning (BTDi3)	22
71	Media Film Studies (GCEAS)	21
72	Performing Arts (BTSd3)	21
73	Uniformed Protective Ser (BTNEC3)	20
74	English Lang/Lit (GCEA)	19
75	Health S.Care (BTCe3)	18
76	Digital Technology (GCEAS)	16
77	French AS/A2 (GCEAS)	16
78	Government and Politics (GCEAS)	16
79	Economics (GCEA)	15
80	Law (GCEA)	15
81	Pure Maths. (GCEA)	15
82	Supporting Teaching and Learning (BTCe2)	15
83	Economics (GCEAS)	14
84	Music Btec (SD3)	14
85	Music (GCEA)	14
86	Trav & Tour (BTSd3)	14
87	Business & Comm (BTDi3)	13

	Subject	Number of learners across RCT studying this subject
88	Law (GCEA)	13
89	Sports Studies (GCEA)	13
90	Public Services (GCEAS)	12
91	Engineering (GCEA)	11
92	Music Technology (BTDi3)	11
93	Health Studies (GCEA)	10
94	Sports Studies (BTXD3)	9
95	Engineer (BTNEC)	8
96	H.Econ Food (GCEA)	8
97	Media Film Studies (GCEA)	8
98	Public Services (GCEA)	8
99	Dance (BTSd3)	7
100	Design 3D (GCEA)	7
101	Spanish (GCEA)	7
102	Engineering (GCEAS)	6
103	French AS/A2 (GCEA)	6
104	Textiles (GCEA)	6
105	Hospitality (BTSd3)	5
106	Science BTEC L3 (BTDi3)	5
107	German (GCEA)	4
108	Health S.Care (BTSd3)	4
109	Sport (BTSd3)	4
110	Accounting (GCEA)	3
111	Digital Technology (GCEA)	3
112	Spanish (GCEAS)	2
113	Textiles (GCEAS)	2
114	German (GCEAS)	1
115	English Lang and Lit (GCEAS)	0