

# **Effectiveness and Efficiency**

## **Report**

### **Central South Consortium**

#### **2020-21**



## CONTENTS

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of the Report</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Overview of Performance</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Overview of Funding</b>	<b>5</b>
4.1	Core Contributions	5
4.2	Additional Funding – Grants	6
4.3	Resource Board	9
<b>Overview of Main Strands of Activities</b>		<b>11</b>
5.0	Support for Governors	11
6.0	Digital Learning	16
7.0	Early Career Pathways	20
8.0	Leadership Support and Development	26
<b>9.0</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>10.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>35</b>

<b>APPENDIX A</b>	<b>Case Study - Support for Governors</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>APPENDIX B</b>	<b>Case Study - Digital Learning</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>APPENDIX C</b>	<b>Case Study - Early Career Pathways</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>APPENDIX D</b>	<b>Case Study - Leadership Support and Development</b>	<b>43</b>

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report provides an overview of Central South Consortium (CSC) in the academic year 2020-21. The report is designed to provide Local Authorities (LAs), schools, Welsh Government (WG) and other stakeholders with a clear and comprehensive report on the efficiency and effectiveness of the work of CSC and its contribution to school improvement across the region.

The main body of the report provides an analysis of the progress made in relation to a number of key strands of work that CSC identified in partnership with LAs and schools as priorities within its Business Plan for 2020-21. The report provides an overview of the activities undertaken in relation to each strand, provides quantitative and qualitative information on outputs and outcomes, and comments on the impact<sup>1</sup> achieved so far.

## **2.0 BACKGROUND**

CSC evaluates the organisation's performance through self-evaluation processes that form the basis for business planning and monitoring activities. LA performance meetings are held regularly with the Senior Management Team, Principal Improvement Partners (PIPs) and LA Director/Chief Education Officers, to discuss progress at a more local level and identify any barriers. Reports are presented on a regular basis to Directors via the CSC Management Board and Partnership group as well as the Joint Committee on the progress and performance of the organisation. In addition, reports are presented to WG in accordance with ministerial challenge and review events. Members of the senior management team and PIPs attend each council's Education Scrutiny Committee meetings at least once per year and attend other scrutiny meetings on request.

The Joint Committee meets regularly and formally approves the annual Business Plan and budget for the service, holding the service to account in terms of performance and budgetary control. The consortium Business Plan for April 2020 to March 2021 can be found [here](#). During 2020-21, the Business Plan had five priorities:

1. Develop a high-quality education profession
2. Develop highly effective leadership to facilitate working collaboratively to raise standards
3. Develop strong and inclusive schools committed to excellence, equity and wellbeing
4. Continue to develop robust assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements supporting a self-improving system
5. Improve the effectiveness and efficiency of CSC

An annual report on the progress and impact of the Business Plan is presented to the CSC Management Board and Joint Committee each year in the summer term.

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<sup>1</sup> CSC are developing a shared definition for the term 'impact', and this will be incorporated into future reports

Scrutiny and challenge are undertaken by the members of the CSC Management Board, that meets on a monthly basis to challenge performance, to agree strategy and to have an opportunity to challenge findings. A treasurer's report is a standard item on the agenda for the Joint Committee meeting.

During 2020-21, four of the consortium's main areas of work – Support for Governors, Digital Learning, Early Career Pathways and Leadership Support and Development – were selected for focused evaluation. This report will therefore provide a detailed assessment of impact in each of these areas.

### **3.0 OVERVIEW OF PERFORMANCE**

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, WG has cancelled most of the statutory data collections for both 2020 and also for 2021. The collections suspended include:

- Attendance: Primary 2020 and 2021 data collections
- Attendance: Secondary 2020 and 2021 data collections
- National Data Collections (NDC) 2020 and 2021 data collections

The Minister for Education also confirmed on 21 June 2021<sup>2</sup> that WG would not be publishing performance measures related to the 2021 summer examinations series, which covers all school and post-16 performance measures for the 2020-21 academic year. In addition, given the clear implications that there will be ongoing disruptions for qualifications awarded next year, WG have suspended key stage 4 and legacy sixth form performance measures for the 2021-22 academic year also. Therefore, there are no performance measures available for key stage 4 or post-16 for summer 2020 and 2021 results, and these will also not be available for results published for summer 2022.

The Statistical bulletins for GCSE and A Level results will continue to be published for 2020-21 as made available for 2019-20, but they will not contain key stage 4 or legacy sixth form performance measures and will only include national level data with amended content to previous releases of these bulletins.

Therefore, for 2020-21 there are no publicly available performance measures at school, LA or Regional Consortia level that can be included in this report, as was the situation for last year.

The publication of performance data on My Local School is also suspended, with the publication of the national categorisation<sup>3</sup> also being suspended for 2021-22 due to the processes not being held for the academic years 2020-21 and 2021-22. This report does not contain any information for the national categorisation as this was included in the report published last year.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://gov.wales/written-statement-school-information-improvement-and-inspection-arrangements-supporting-renewal-and>

<sup>3</sup> <https://gov.wales/school-categorisations-be-suspended-next-year>

All Estyn inspections were suspended in March 2020<sup>4</sup>; therefore, no analysis is included in this report as no inspections took place between September 2020 and July 2021.

#### **4.0 OVERVIEW OF FUNDING**

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

- Core LA Funding with individual LA contributions determined using the Indicator Based Assessment for education (IBA) and agreed by Joint Committee.
- 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.

The recent trends in both these sources of income for the consortium are detailed below.

#### **4.1 Core Contributions**

In 2020-21, the consortium received c. £3.6m contributions from the five LAs across the region. The funding was used to support the core function of school improvement. Each year since 2016, the consortium has delivered the school improvement function for the region, incorporating more than £700k of efficiency savings over that time.

A summary of the financial outputs for 2020-21 by individual LA can be found in table 1. The Principal Improvement Partner (PIP) and Improvement Partner (IP) figures reflect where actual support is deployed. All other costs are apportioned by IBA:

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.estyn.gov.wales/news/estyn-will-not-inspect-maintained-schools-next-academic-year-statement-meilyr-rowlands-hmci>

Table 1: Financial Outputs for 2020-21 by LA

Cost Category	Outturn 2020-21	City & County of Cardiff	Bridgend CBC	Vale of Glam CBC	Merthyr CBC	RCT CBC
		£	£	£	£	£
IBA %		36.19%	15.38%	14.79%	6.34%	27.30%
<b>LA Contributions</b>	<b>3,599,528</b>	<b>1,302,701</b>	<b>553,773</b>	<b>532,456</b>	<b>228,196</b>	<b>982,402</b>
Principal Improvement Partners	470,065	135,360	65,550	63,325	78,390	127,440
Improvement Partners	1,466,411	530,707	225,602	216,917	92,965	400,220
Other Employees	934,616	338,246	143,787	138,252	59,251	255,080
Premises	153,420	55,524	23,603	22,694	9,727	41,872
Transport	4,665	1,688	718	690	296	1,273
Supplies & Services	370,318	134,005	57,441	54,423	23,378	101,071
Commissioning	126,000	45,601	19,385	18,638	7,987	34,389
Support Services	111,833	40,473	17,205	16,543	7,090	30,522
<b>Gross Core Expenditure*</b>	<b>3,637,328</b>	<b>1,281,604</b>	<b>553,291</b>	<b>531,482</b>	<b>279,085</b>	<b>991,867</b>
<b>% SPEND RECEIVED</b>		<b>35.23%</b>	<b>15.21%</b>	<b>14.61%</b>	<b>7.67%</b>	<b>27.27%</b>

\*£3,600k of contributions were received from LAs. However, the gross expenditure incurred reached £3,637k. This was net off by £47k of grant funding/school income.

CSC apportioned budget for regional services according to the specific needs of schools. In 2020-21, expenditure (of core budget) in one out of the five LAs was higher than the amounts it had contributed (in line with the consortium core value to deploy resources to the areas of greatest need).

#### 4.2 Additional Funding – Grants

In addition to the core contributions from LAs, the consortium was also in receipt of grant funding from WG. With the launch of the national strategy, ‘Education for Wales: Our National Mission’, WG streamlined the grant funding processes. There are now only two grants received by

consortia: Regional Consortia School Improvement Grant (RCSIG) and Pupil Development Grant (PDG). In 2020-21, the following funding was received:

*Table 2: WG Grant Funding*

<b>Grant</b>	<b>Total £</b>	<b>Delegated to LAs/schools £</b>	<b>Centrally retained £</b>
RCSIG	43,501,336	39,936,422	3,564,914
PDG	34,093,962	33,905,705	250,479
<b>Total</b>	<b>77,595,298</b>	<b>73,779,905</b>	<b>3,815,393</b>

To manage these grant streams effectively, the consortium adheres to strict governance arrangements:

- Initial allocations are provided by WG and apportionment proposals presented to Directors and Members of the Joint Committee for challenge and agreement.
- Director/Member decisions are shared with the regional finance group, to determine operational processes.
- CSC grants team identifies project managers and budget holders (in line with schemes of delegation).
- Consortium devise Service Level Agreements (SLA) between schools and LAs in relation to grant funding initiatives to hold stakeholders to account.
- The CSC grants team works to a grant compliance framework.

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 3: Expenditure of the Regional Consortia School Improvement Grant by LA in 2020-21

Cost Category	Outturn 2020-21	City & County of Cardiff	Bridgend CBC	Vale of Glam CBC	Merthyr CBC	RCT CBC
		£	£	£	£	£
		36.19%	15.38%	14.79%	6.34%	27.30%
Curriculum & assessment	189,000	53,000	44,000	64,000	4,000	24,000
Developing a high-quality education profession	36,887,746	13,648,792	5,680,630	5,683,250	2,424,936	9,450,139
Leadership	129,396	42,704	14,030	21,090	13,730	37,843
Strong and inclusive schools committed to excellence equity & wellbeing	33,843,483	13,624,317	5,213,740	3,380,952	2,265,011	9,359,462
Supporting a self- improving system	2,730,279	1,030,433	449,926	287,481	184,973	777,466
<b>Total</b>	<b>73,779,905</b>	<b>28,399,246</b>	<b>11,402,326</b>	<b>4892,650</b>	<b>9,436,773</b>	<b>19,648,909</b>
<b>% spend received</b>		<b>38.45</b>	<b>15.35</b>	<b>12.95</b>	<b>6.62</b>	<b>26.63</b>

In 2020-21, monetary benefits (in terms of grant spend) of regional working were achieved by Cardiff and Merthyr Tydfil with the additional benefits of working regionally seen in the impact on outcomes across the region. The table below summarises the financial outputs (of both core and grant funding):



Table 4: Actual Total Expenditure by LAs 2020-21

Cost Category	Outturn 2020- 2021	City & County of Cardiff	Bridgend CBC	Vale of Glam CBC	Merthyr CBC	RCT CBC
		£	£	£	£	£
		36.19%	15.38%	14.79%	6.34%	27.30%
Gross core expenditure	3,637,328	1,281,604	553,290	531,483	279,083	991,867
Delegated grant	73,779,905	28,399,246	11,402,326	9,436,773	4,892,650	19,648,909
Total expenditure	77,417,233	29,680,850	11,955,616	9,968,256	5,171,733	20,640,777
		<b>38.34%</b>	<b>15.44%</b>	<b>12.88%</b>	<b>6.68%</b>	<b>26.66%</b>

In 2020-21, monetary benefits (in terms of total spend) of regional working were achieved by Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil and Bridgend.

#### 4.3 Resource Board

In addition to the above budgeted funding, CSC has also developed a process for supporting vulnerable schools which are identified within the financial year. The table below shows how this funding was allocated during 2020-21:

Table 5: Resource Board Allocations 2020-21

Local Authority	£	% Split	No of Schools Supported
Bridgend CBC	2,400	1%	1
Cardiff Council	66,200	35%	31
RCT CBC	53,200	28%	15
Vale of Glamorgan CBC	43,900	24%	15
Merthyr Tydfil CBC	22,100	12%	7
	<b>187,800</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>69</b>

One project involved colleagues meeting to review mathematics across a cluster of schools to develop a shared understanding of core proficiencies. Colleagues shared and discussed the AoLE documentation and with the support of CSC Strategic Staff, consistency of understanding.

Cluster colleagues provided examples of activities that could be used:

- to address the different maths proficiencies at the different progression steps and
- as an ideas bank for staff across the cluster.

Learning was shared in professional learning/INSET meetings by teachers with staff in their own schools, and surveys suggest an improved understanding of the core proficiencies across the cluster.

The impact of the activities funded by this budget is evaluated by the school and the individual IP, and, where appropriate, included within local authority performance reports. Processes for brokerage have been further refined and developed within CSC to ensure that a comprehensive summary of the impact of this work will be available in future reports.

## OVERVIEW OF MAIN STRANDS OF ACTIVITY

### 5.0 Support for Governors

#### Background and objectives

The past year has given opportunity for existing Central South Consortium (CSC) Governance projects to be further consolidated and new school support processes to be developed. The role and significance of school governance is something that CSC recognises as essential in contributing to strong leadership and effective school improvement.

The aim of CSC's work in relation to governance has been to better equip governors with the necessary knowledge and skill to carry out their roles effectively and self-evaluate robustly to ensure that their work is continually being refined and improved.

It has also been recognised that there are instances when governing bodies need support to ensure that their work is as strategic and impactful as it possibly can be. CSC has developed processes to ensure that we are able to provide support and guidance appropriate to the particular circumstance of each school. The support which is available includes:

- Self-evaluation toolkit
- Governor professional learning
- Governor groups
- Regional Leads for governance

#### 5.1 Self-Evaluation Toolkit

##### 5.1.1 What have we done this year?

The CSC Self-Evaluation Toolkit has been developed in collaboration with LA governor support officers, members of CSC Governor Stakeholder Group and the CSC school improvement team. The CSC Self-Evaluation Toolkit has been used in pilot format by the newly appointed 'Regional Leads for Governance' (RLGs) and feedback has been received on the efficacy of the format and content before making the toolkit widely available for all schools. The intention is that this CSC Self-Evaluation Toolkit will be made available through the CSC website and promoted by improvement partners.

##### 5.1.2 What evidence of impact do we have?

RLGs have reported that the Self-Evaluation Toolkit is effective in identifying strengths and areas for development within a Governing Body (GB). They have identified that it could be used to inform ongoing improvement for governors; for example, as a three-year Action Plan or in a more bespoke approach focused on specific strands within the toolkit.

### 5.1.3 Next steps

**To promote the use of the Governing Body Self-Evaluation Toolkit across CSC. This will be supported by our improvement partners and the CSC communications team**

## 5.2 Governor Professional Learning

### 5.2.1 What have we done this year?

The delivery of mandatory professional learning for governors is delegated by the five Local Authorities to CSC. A termly timetable of professional learning opportunities is produced by CSC and distributed to governor support officers in the five Local Authorities. LA officers distribute the professional learning timetable to every school governor. In addition to mandatory training, CSC also provides professional learning for governors in relation to key areas of the national reform agenda e.g. Curriculum for Wales updates and Schools as Learning Organisations. During the pandemic, governor professional learning has continued with adaptations to deliver all sessions remotely. The content of the training materials was reflective of the challenges faced by schools due to the pandemic. While the opportunity for face-to-face discussion was not possible, overall the levels of engagement by governors remained strong and in fact superseded previous years. In 2020-21, levels of engagement were 45% higher than the previous 3-year average (see below for details).

### 5.2.2 What evidence of impact do we have?

Following each professional learning event, attendance registers are collated and course evaluations are completed by delegates. More governors participated in CSC's Governor professional learning offer in 2020-21 compared to any year previously.

*Table 6: Governor Attendance*

Local Authority	Sum of 16-17	Sum of 17-18	Sum of 18-19	Sum of 19-20	Sum of 20-21	Sum of Total engagements 2016-21
<b>Bridgend</b>	102	151	127	82	214	676
<b>Cardiff</b>	295	377	490	213	459	1834
<b>Merthyr</b>	43	80	75	36	102	336
<b>RCT</b>	178	309	144	116	401	1148
<b>Vale</b>	323	300	340	133	226	1322
<b>Grand Total</b>	941	1217	1176	580	1402	5316

There are 6000 governors across the CSC region. All new governors attend the mandatory professional learning (New Governor, Understanding Data and New Chair of Governors). All other professional learning is available for governors to access when and if they require. Below is a summary of course evaluations:

Table 7: Analysis of Evaluations Received

Governor PL academic Year 20-21		Percentage of respondents who stated...			
	Number of evaluations received	The PL provided content relevant to their role	They will make adjustments to their practice based on their learning	They will meet with colleagues to discuss the PL	They did not anticipate any barriers to applying their learning
<b>New Governors</b>	179	86.0%	46.9%	33.5%	84.9%
<b>New Chair of Governors</b>	18	88.9%	72.2%	66.7%	77.8%
<b>Using Data</b>	227	82.4%	43.6%	34.8%	85.0%
<b>HT Performance Management</b>	134	73.1%	40.3%	47.0%	85.8%
<b>Total</b>	558	81.5%	44.8%	38.4%	84.9%

- Overall, 81.5% of respondents stated that the professional learning was relevant to their role with 44.8% stating that they would make adjustments to their practice based on their learning. This percentage rose to 72.2% in relation to the new chair of governors training.
- In addition, 38.4% stated that they would meet with colleagues to discuss the PL. This ranged from 33.5% in respect of the new governor training to 66.7% for new chair of governor training.
- 84.9% of respondents did not anticipate any barriers to applying their learning. The most likely barrier was 'not enough time to embed', with 4.3% of respondents stating this as an issue.

In addition to course evaluations, governors were also asked to complete a survey to evaluate the effectiveness of the professional learning offered in meeting their needs as a governor. This survey was analysed, and the information was used to identify next steps in refining the CSC professional learning offer. The majority of responses to online professional learning offer were positive. However, areas for development were identified and refinements will be made as a result e.g. timings of the sessions.

### 5.2.3 Next steps

**Refine the governor survey to help inform the professional learning offer for governors.**

## **5.3 CSC Governor Groups**

### **5.3.1 What have we done this year?**

The Governor Stakeholder Group is a core element of the overall management structure of CSC and plays a key role in evaluation and scrutiny of the organisation. The Governor Stakeholder Group is made up of governor representatives of each local authority. The Governor Leads Group is made up of governor support officers from each of the five Local Authorities. Both groups have continued to meet throughout the pandemic to ensure consistency of approach in supporting and developing governance across CSC. Both groups are pivotal in providing strategic and operational direction to our governor development professional learning offer. New 'terms of reference' have been agreed to ensure clarity and consistency of approach in strategic planning across both bodies. This work will develop further into the coming academic year.

### **5.3.2 What evidence of impact do we have?**

During the pandemic, the Governor Leads Group and the Governor Steering Group were effective in providing good communication to schools on the need to move to online professional learning. Their support and encouragement ensured increased attendance at all professional learning events compared to previous years. 82% of governors found this method of delivery effective and positive comments include "the offer has responded well to the pandemic, so I commend officers for that" and "all training sessions that I have attended online have been to a very high standards, really informative and accessible."

### **5.3.3 Next steps**

**Further develop collaboration opportunities between the Governor Leads and the Governor Steering Group to inform the strategic direction of governance across the region.**

## **5.4 Regional Leaders of Governance (RLG)**

### **5.4.1 What have we done this year?**

To ensure that leadership at all levels is supported, a new Regional Leaders of Governance (RLG) group was created in spring term 2021. These highly effective governors with extensive experience will offer peer-to peer support to governing bodies who are most in need. The need for RLG support is identified and brokered by the school's CSC Improvement Partner in collaboration with the headteacher, the school's Governing Body and the local authority. Thirteen RLGs were appointed following a rigorous recruitment process and will begin deployment at the start of 2021-22 to provide strategic and operational support for schools where governance is an area for improvement.

### **5.4.2 What evidence of impact do we have?**

The impact of the RLG's work will become evident into the coming academic year once deployment has commenced.

#### **5.4.3 Next steps**

- **Ensure that the RLGs are appropriately and widely deployed to meet governance needs across schools. This will be delivered as part of the CSC Brokerage process.**
- **Develop the coaching and mentoring skills of the RLG group. This will be achieved through access to a range of professional learning. This will include short twilight sessions and access to the National Coaching and Mentoring Programme.**

Please see case study in Appendix A.

## 6.0 Digital Learning

“Our children and young people already inhabit a digital world and their personal, social and educational lives are increasingly intertwined with technology in various, rapidly changing forms.”<sup>5</sup> (Donaldson, 2015, p. 8)

### 6.1 Background and Objectives

Provision and standards of digital learning have been high priority for Welsh Government, regional consortia and Local Authorities, as well as all schools across Wales, as detailed in the requirements of [Curriculum for Wales](#). Additionally, the need to support remote and blended learning has been increased due to the response to the pandemic. As schools responded to emerging restrictions, distance and blended learning approaches were required to support the continuation of learning across Wales. Distance learning was delivered during periods where most pupils and staff were working from their homes. Blended learning is an approach that combines face-to-face, distance, digital and online learning experiences. This was necessary during periods of individual, class or year group isolation. Additionally, headteachers and schools also had to consider the significant number of digitally deprived pupils and the complex nature of home situations. Local Authorities retained responsibility for provision of digital devices and connectivity. With this being so, CSC was required to develop an understanding of this work and related implications, in order to best support schools across the region.

Furthermore, Curriculum for Wales (CfW) represents an opportunity to ensure that digital learning is a strong cross-curricular component of education. We recognise the importance of preparing pupils for future employment in a digital world. Curriculum for Wales states that “These are [digital] skills that can be transferred to the world of work, enabling learners to adapt and thrive in the modern world.” (Welsh Government, 2020)

Supporting the system to deliver synchronous and asynchronous learning has been a key objective for CSC. Synchronous learning involves teaching where the teacher is present at the same time as the learner(s). This can take place face- to-face or online. Asynchronous learning is where teaching materials are provided, and learners work through them in their own time. This could include a variety of media, including audio and video clips. Welsh Government have provided guidance on the use of live streaming which was used to support the design of professional learning and supporting materials from CSC. This is in addition to development in the use of digital technology to support communication and collaboration, and a continued commitment to strengthening cross-curricular digital opportunities.

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<sup>5</sup> Donaldson, G., 2015. *Successful Futures: Independent review of curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales*. Caerdydd: Llywodraeth Cenedlaethol Cymru.



## 6.2 What have we done this year?

Our initial response to Covid-19 was to offer bespoke support, which we provided to more than 70 schools who had directly requested this from CSC. Each of these schools received tailored support in the use of technology to support distance and blended learning. A broad range of professional learning opportunities complemented this direct support. Examples of such can be found [here](#).

Following previous cluster-based support, CSC developed asynchronous materials to improve understanding of the Digital Competence Framework (DCF). The 'DCF in-depth' was developed in partnership with schools and has been accessed over 1,600 times to date, with many practitioners reporting that the professional learning improved their subject knowledge. These materials have also been the basis for DCF network meetings, attended by 77 practitioners (58 Primary / 17 Secondary / 2 Special schools) who further developed their understanding of effective practice in cross-curricular digital skills. Evaluative data indicates that many practitioners increased their subject knowledge following the networks. A majority of attendees reported their intention to share learning with colleagues at school and most would recommend the professional learning to others.

A wide range of webinars and synchronous professional learning opportunities were made available to support adoption of technology for blended learning. Provision included webinars demonstrating effective use of Flipgrid and Microsoft Teams. Approximately 180 attendees accessed this support. Following each synchronous activity, materials were made available on-demand. Resources to support specific digital applications can be found [here](#) and a further selection to support pedagogical approaches [here](#).

A series of webinars was provided to support newly qualified teachers (NQTs) in the use of online and collaborative technology. Approximately 360 attendees accessed this support, which was led by practitioners from across the region. A majority indicated they would make adjustments to their practice following this professional learning and very few reported barriers to implementing change. These practitioners had previously completed a Google Certified Trainer programme during 2019/2020.

Secondary practitioners have been supported through the development of asynchronous units on the effective use of computational thinking strategies across the curriculum. Furthermore, in supporting practitioners through periods of blended learning, [a podcast](#) was released which considered the ways in which digital technology could impact on wellbeing.

## 6.3 What evidence of impact do we have?

Those accessing professional learning had opportunity to evaluate provision for each programme.

Most attendees for digital professional learning reported that their knowledge of subject matter had been enhanced through engaging with the provision. In addition, many participants (83%) agreed that the professional learning was appropriate to needs and level of skill. Many participants (80%) stated they would recommend the professional learning to others while very few (6%) felt the professional learning was not relevant to them.

Further evaluative data showed many (70%) intended to share their professional learning with colleagues. Around half of the participants indicated their intention to discuss professional learning with senior leaders. This reflects the rapid and significant change driven by the response to Covid-19 and developing approaches to blended learning. Again, a majority stated they would adjust their practice following the professional learning. A small number of respondents indicated their need to further explore applications on offer via the national platform (Hwb) and subsequent professional learning was designed because of such feedback. For example, professional learning was designed and delivered to support practitioners in the use of [Adobe Spark, Flipgrid and Mote](#).

Hwb usage data has increased markedly since the outbreak of the pandemic. All professional learning delivered by CSC’s Digital Team aims to promote the platform and its further adoption. This can be illustrated through the following table:

*Table 8: Hwb Login Data*

Month	CSC region Logins (total)	CSC region Logins (pupils)
March 2019	181,681	131,708
March 2020	613,647	459,235
March 2021	682,636	484,718

The most significant barrier to utilising the professional learning was a lack of time to embed, with 11% reporting this issue. Very few reported further barriers linked to lack of familiarity with the national platform, their own staff role and the age of the pupils taught.

Most respondents felt the professional learning would have at least some impact on their learners, with more than half expecting a high level of impact. Very few expected low or minimal impact on pupils.

Further positive comments in evaluation data included:

- A majority of practitioners reported an appreciation of practical examples of progression in digital competence, which illustrated the increasing skill for each strand of the DCF.
- Again, a majority of practitioners appreciated the wide range of blended learning strategies based on Hwb applications.
- A few respondents were pleased that aspects of online safety were covered through professional learning.

- A minority of practitioners made positive comments relating to the range of media included in professional learning materials.

#### **6.4 Next steps**

**As the digital skills of the workforce have increased due to the response to the pandemic, we now have opportunity to build on this progress. Cross-curricular digital skills (DCF) need further development regionally, as opportunities for collaboration and data and computational thinking are underdeveloped. This has been highlighted via Estyn inspection reports, monitoring and evaluation activities such as learning walks, book scrutiny and pupil voice undertaken by CSC, and through direct requests from school leaders and coordinators.**

**Professional discussions with practitioners about digital learning have highlighted the need for exemplification of innovative and creative use of digital skills in cross-curricular contexts. With this being the case, the rich task development will support schools' understanding of the broad possibilities that can be delivered via Hwb applications, aligning to the current curriculum while considering possible opportunities ahead of Curriculum for Wales. Furthermore, there is a distinct lack of supporting materials to support the development of digital skills within the foundation phase. This is particularly true in the Welsh context. Our early years digital project will seek to remedy this lack of support through the provision of broad exemplification materials.**

**During the pandemic, schools utilised digital applications which included features that made collaboration possible. These applications are familiar to most practitioners; however, the collaborative features are less developed, and supporting resources are required to illustrate their potential.**

**Further programmes and materials are required to support new and experienced coordinators of digital learning as they seek to develop post-pandemic strategies. Additionally, there is opportunity to consider what effective practice, deployed over the past year, can be used to enhance classroom teaching.**

**Secondary school colleagues raised the need for supporting resources to strengthen approaches to the new Digital Technology GCSE, and so a collaborative project will begin from the autumn term 2021. This project will create a repository of supporting resources mapped against each unit of the new qualification, support those who are teaching this content for the first time.**

Please see Appendix B for case study

## **7.0 The Early Career Pathway**

### **7.1 Background and objectives**

Our National Mission has one of its major objectives centred on developing a high-quality profession. Outcomes and support for student teachers and newly qualified teachers (NQTs) therefore continue to be a priority for Welsh Government (WG), regional consortia, Higher Education (HE) providers and Initial Teacher Education (ITE) schools across Wales.

Since the publication of the Furlong Report, *‘Teaching Tomorrow’s Teachers’* (Furlong, J. 2015), ITE in Wales has entered a period of reform. All Higher Education Institution (HEI) providers have been required to set up new ITE Partnerships, to devise new Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) and Bachelor of Education (BA Ed) with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) programmes in closer collaboration with schools and consortia and to submit them for accreditation by Education Workforce Council (EWC). The regional consortia ITE leads sit on the Strategic Leadership Boards of the HEIs they work with, and have been contributors in the accreditation process. They also advise on and monitor the selection/deselection and progress of schools within the partnerships.

The legislation for the statutory induction process for NQTs has been amended three times since the start of the Covid pandemic in March 2020. It has also been reviewed twice in the last two years in order to take into account the inability of many NQTs to work enough school based, face-to-face learning sessions to complete induction. Blended learning at-home sessions, staffing ‘hubs’ and undertaking self-motivated professional learning were able to count as sessions worked, and the total number of sessions required to complete induction was reduced from 380 sessions to ‘between 110 and 380’. It was made clear that these changes were only temporary, but it required our external verifiers and induction mentors to provide much more flexible support.

Since the publication of the report, *Learning to be a teacher for Wales: the induction of teachers into the profession* (Prof Waters, M. Nov 2020), preparations have commenced to review and reform the induction process to be more streamlined with ITE and more appropriately tailored to the needs of novice practitioners. The academic year 2021-22 will be one of capacity building, trialling initiatives and consulting with stakeholders before introducing new induction legislation in 2022-23.

### **7.2 What have we done this year?**

- Created The Early Career Pathway workstream (previously known as ITE and Induction). This meant that strategic planning demonstrated a much clearer ‘line of sight’ in support of student teachers gaining QTS and going on to become newly qualified teachers.
- Developed a new bridging presentation called *An Introduction to Induction* that was offered both as a facilitated online ‘live’ session to all students in our ITE Partnerships and as an

asynchronous recorded session that was made available to students by their universities. The presentation was shared with other regions, and nearly 1000 students across Wales were able to receive consistent messages about induction before they left university.

- Implemented an ITE Graduate Teams space in the summer term 2020, for anyone intending to live/work in the CSC region to meet the induction team, have a chance to ask questions and be given access to our 'ITE Graduate PL Strategy' booklet. This publication was designed to help those students newly awarded QTS to start addressing the development targets they had identified in their Career Entry Profiles. In this first year, nearly 150 ITE graduates engaged with CSC before they formally commenced induction.
- A small group of five students from the Teams site expressed an interest in becoming a focus group for us to ensure that all bridging activity was developed in response to student needs for 2021-22 and also to provide feedback on their journeys as NQTs to inform induction planning. This will be ongoing work into next year.
- Playlists were created that were subsequently made nationally available to all students gaining QTS with practical tips and resources relating to induction: The Process of Commencing Induction; Joining A School; Becoming a Supply Teacher and Preparing for an interview.
- Worked with 10 Lead ITE schools to develop a handbook: *10 Ways to Support ITE in Schools*. The 10 areas were identified through a deep discussion of what issues were common to all schools supporting student teachers, regardless of which ITE partnership they were in. They were: Leadership; Strategic planning; Funding; Supporting theory and practice; Research and enquiry; Wellbeing; Mentoring; QTS Standards; Welsh language development; and Academic assignments. This handbook was shared with all 188 schools supporting ITE in the region and was very well received by headteachers, who appreciated its clarity, consistent key messages and potential to shape school-level planning. Four HEIs also had a section each to outline their particular models. As a result of being shared through CSC communication channels, the handbook also prompted queries from schools who wanted to find out how they could become more involved in ITE.
- With Professor Mick Waters as the keynote speaker, CSC organised and held the first multi-partnership ITE Professional Learning (PL) event, giving four HEIs the chance to showcase elements of their programmes, students the chance to share their experiences and schools to offer insight into their particular ITE initiatives. The ITE Handbook was also launched at this event. Professor Waters said after the event: *'This is the kind of event we need to see more of. It is the first time that different HEI partnerships have shared the same celebratory platform.'*
- The regional professional learning programme Aspire / Anelu was transposed to become a facilitated online programme to enable all NQTs to access it with flexible dates and times offered by the Professional Learning (PL) tutors. To further support NQTs during this time of upheaval, NQTs were offered additional PL tutorials where NQTs could discuss their professional progress against the induction standards.
- Strengthened the PL offer for those NQTs working on supply. All national and regional events were offered as twilights and Saturday sessions. Take-up was much increased on the previous year, with 177 STS NQTs engaging in 'out of hours' sessions.

- PL offer for induction mentors (IMs) was increased this year. As well as the national training, 22 IMs were recruited to undertake the twilight Train the Trainer coaching twilights, and 13 of these went on to complete the L3 accredited coaching programme with 'Results Driven Group'. CSC also held the first IM mini conference where those IMs on the coaching programme presented aspects of their practice.
- Extra support for External Verifiers (EVs), who quality assure (QA) the induction process, took the form of updated national training, lead EV support, monthly bulletins and impact review reports.
- Development of an induction survey as a national group that was sent out to all schools for the attention of NQTs, IMs and EVs. Over 600 responses were received across Wales, with nearly 250 from the CSC region.

### **7.3 What evidence of impact do we have?**

- Due to the holistic approach to communication, engagement with national training has improved. This training plays a crucial role in ensuring that all induction stakeholders understand the induction process. 78% of all NQTs attended compared to 74% the previous year. 48% of all IMs attended compared to 27% the previous year. 100% of EVs attended compared to 96% the previous year.
- Following the national training a regional database was established, which enabled further communication and regional messages to be sent directly, and all attendees were sent an Induction Handbook bespoke to the region to reinforce key messages.
- The compliance to key expectations outlined in national training and regular communications was measured through a series of monthly impact review evaluations, where a random selection of 100 induction profiles were analysed each month. This enabled direct communication to take place with induction stakeholders, to meet the time sensitive requirements of the induction process.
- Networking opportunities were established as a result of the recommendations of the national induction survey. This has resulted in the ability to provide more frequent communications and updates via monthly network meetings with IMs and EVs. A supplementary IM conference and EV monthly information bulletin was also introduced.
- As a result of the request for additional professional learning, a bespoke mentoring programme for IMs was developed, to be launched in the new academic year (Sept 2021) with engagement from Aberystwyth and University of South Wales (USW) universities.
- The national survey completed by NQTs and IMs identified the same six areas as needing further support from their induction team and/or professional learning: Assessment; Curriculum for Wales; managing the learning environment; ALN; blended learning; and wellbeing. As a result, each area has been strengthened within both the national and regional professional learning offers for the next year. In addition, the areas have been discussed with HEI providers to strengthen the coverage of these areas in ITE and to align key messages to coverage for NQTs.

- Improved communication with NQTs culminated in approximately 250 NQTs working in schools accessing the Aspire / Anelu programme. A further 100 NQTs working on supply accessed the programme through twilights or Saturdays.

Out of 350 NQTs (including those on supply)

- 95% agreed strongly that the programme overall enhanced their knowledge of the subject matter (3% disagreed)
  - 94% agreed strongly that the programme content overall was appropriate to their needs and skill level (6% disagreed)
  - 96% agreed strongly that the programme content overall was relevant to their daily work (3% disagreed)
  - 96% would recommend this programme to NQTs in future (3% disagreed)
- Quality Assurance of the newly transposed online professional learning programmes, e-Aspire<sup>6</sup> and e-Anelu, provided evidence of strong facilitation and NQT responses in terms of how the programme affected their professional behaviours and practice. Examples of evaluations by quality assurance leads include:

*‘Very good questioning and use of chat bar and jamboards allowed full participation of delegates and allowed reflection on current practice. The level of thinking in some sessions was deep, with facilitators not allowing first answers to go unchallenged.’*

*‘The impact of the professional learning is evident in the PLEs that are being written this year, relating to the professional learning standard descriptors There are far fewer PLEs not being approved initially by induction mentors.’*

- The ITE PL event was attended by 178 practitioners from HEIs, schools, Welsh Government, CSC and Estyn. Comments received included:

*‘The opportunities for professional discussions were so useful. It was great to hear about how research will be integrated into the ITE programmes.’ Ysgol Ty Coch (RCT)*

*‘Excellent refresh of ITE as I will be undertaking the role of School Mentor again next year. The speakers were very engaging and thought provoking.’ Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Rhydywaun (RCT)*

*‘Particularly enjoyed the OU session on 'lesson study' approaches - am now seriously reflecting on introducing this with whole-school staff to align the approaches for all practitioners regardless of length of career experience.’ Pear Tree Federation (Cardiff)*

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<sup>6</sup> A: Aspiration for learning, S: Skills needed by learners and teachers, P: Planning, I: Impact, R: Role modelling, E: Empowered thinking for learning

*'It was a well-organised event and it was good to see the connectedness of the system in ITE.'* Cadoxton Primary (Vale of Glamorgan)

- As a result of all the adaptations to the professional learning offer provided by CSC, and despite the challenges facing NQTs undertaking induction this year, 93% of all eligible NQTs within CSC passed induction, with 7% receiving an extension to continue into the next academic year. There were 0% fails.

#### **7.4 Next steps**

- In accordance with suggestions made in Professor Mick Waters' report on induction, *Learning to be a teacher for Wales: the induction of teachers into the profession*, it was agreed with Welsh Government that the professional learning offer for NQTs would be extended to six half-day sessions of nationally developed PL, and five full days of a regional offer that would offer NQTs agency to have some choice in the PL they accessed.
- It was agreed by the CSC induction team that the five regional days would incorporate a more condensed *Aspire/Anelu* programme, to retain the most successful activities from last year, but that there would be supplemental sessions with a 'drop down choice' element. The entire regional offer will be facilitated by the PL tutors, so that NQTs are still working in a supportive network while having the chance to engage in wider PL to support their personal development priorities.
- The national group also worked with other national groups e.g., the Curriculum for Wales and Wellbeing groups, to ensure that the key messages being shared with more experienced teachers and leaders will be the same for NQTs.
- Again, in accordance with the Waters' report suggestions, there will be an enhanced PL offer for induction mentors. They will be invited regionally to engage in the twilight 'Train the Trainer' coaching programme, while experienced IMs will be able to express interest in undertaking the funded National RDG Coaching programme. All IMs will be invited to join the Induction Mentor Development Programme that has been co-produced this year with HEIs. This latter programme builds on existing national training and also on the educative mentoring practices of ITE mentors.
- Support for EVs will be strengthened in response to the induction survey findings. There will be a new EV Team Network space, extra support for new EVs and regular bulletins.
- In order to strengthen bridging activities between ITE and induction, members of the team will attend HEI tutor staff development meetings to share details of strategic projects. They will also address students within their university time and invited to join the ITE Graduate site.
- Three Strategic projects, with Cardiff Metropolitan, Swansea and Yr Athrofa, will take place next year, aligned to the results of CSC's induction survey as well as to the strategic plans of each university.
- To build on the ITE Handbook, we will commission 9 Appreciative Enquiries whereby ITE Lead schools will work in triads to visit each other and identify effective ITE practice aligned to the 10 areas of the Handbook. The summative feedback given by the 'lead enquirers' will



be shaped into a report that will be shared with all schools supporting student teachers in the region and the HEI providers that manage the partnerships. It will be the first time we will have a region wide picture of good ITE practices.

- **A new Early Career Pathway Focus Group will enable us to capture and articulate even more specifically what the needs of students might be prior to them starting induction and how we might strengthen our support of NQTs in terms of generating new resources e.g. building on Think Like a Teacher.**
- **The annual report to Directors summarised activity in the areas of ITE and induction and made the following recommendations which will be incorporated next year:**
  - **Consistency of key messages re ITE programmes / ITE providers and the expectations of induction stakeholders**
  - **Raise awareness of resources and support available to ITE schools / mentors, NQTs and induction mentors with stakeholders e.g., at the CSC professional learning event for Improvement Partners and Strategic Leads**
  - **To ensure alignment with the new Estyn framework for inspecting ITE Partnerships, and to ensure robust QA, the Strategic Lead to train as an Additional Inspector for ITE Partnerships**
  - **Consideration to be given to how CSC can support headteachers' recruitment needs and preparedness to employ NQTs who have just gained QTS**

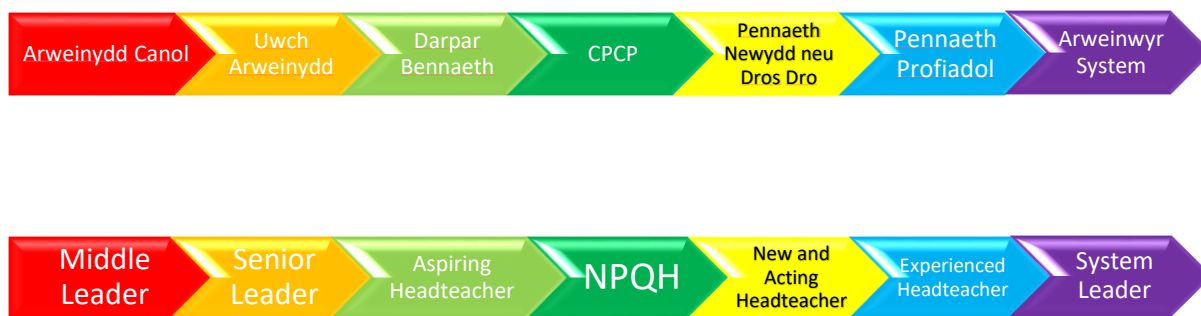
Please see case study in Appendix C.

## 8.0 Leadership Support and Development

### 8.1 Background and objectives

In CSC, Leadership is a core element of our Business Plan and sits within Priority 2: “Develop highly effective leadership to facilitate working collaboratively to raise standards”. Within this priority a key element is the objective to “Enhance current and future leadership through a comprehensive pathway”.

At CSC we have developed a portfolio of endorsed leadership development opportunities based on a national pathway of professional learning.



This suite of professional learning is equipping our leaders with the knowledge, experiences and skills to be effective in their roles. This ensures that we develop inspirational leaders who are well-prepared and supported to lead their schools through educational reform as set out in the National Mission for education.

The leadership pathway programmes are developed by a cross-regional leadership group and delivered regionally. This year, we have delivered the full suite of professional learning programmes from Middle Leader to Experienced Headteacher, developing the Senior Leader Programme to complete the pathway.

We also facilitate assessment for NPQH (National Professional Qualifications for Headship). In line with recommendations from Our National Mission Oct 2020, we have reviewed and adjusted the delivery of the NPQH so that the 2021 cohort can apply their leadership experience in the context of the new conditions.

#### 8.1.2 The effect of Covid-19 on programmes

Due to Covid-19, all existing programmes were paused in the summer term 2020. During this period, the programmes were developed into online delivery modules. Facilitators were re-trained, and information distributed to participants, who had the option of continuing or postponing their place depending on personal circumstances. All programmes, with the

exception of the Experienced Headteacher Programme (delivered by an external company) restarted in September 2020.

### **8.1.3 Enrolment on programmes**

One of the success criteria that we have identified as part of the leadership aspect of the CSC Business Plan is that “All available places on professional learning pathways are occupied by leaders at the appropriate stage in their career”.

As the pathway programmes have a robust application and endorsement process in CSC, we ensure that the leader is accessing the correct programme for the appropriate stage of their career. All applications are reviewed and scored by a panel of senior staff, ensuring that the criteria for each programme is met.

- Middle Leaders: 89 applications received, 78% endorsed, 22% not endorsed.
- Senior Leaders: 87 applications received, 79% endorsed, 21% not endorsed.

If a candidate does not meet the criteria, alternative programmes are suggested which can be a level above or below the programme applied for.

Applications for the programme 2020-21 have exceeded places and are currently fully subscribed. Endorsed participants:

- Middle Leader – 178 (108 in cohort 1 and 70 in cohort 2)
- Senior Leader – 69
- Aspiring Headteacher – 63
- NPQH – 27
- New and Acting Headteacher – 56 (28 cohort in 2 and 28 in cohort 3)
- Experienced Headteacher – 20

### **8.1.4 Comparison with previous years**

As the Middle, Senior and Aspiring headteacher programmes are new, we have no comparable participation data. However, compared to national figures we have equal to or more participants per our school population accessing these programmes than other regions. For example, in NPQH we had 45% of the overall participants nationally.

### **8.1.5 Programme evaluation**

The CSC Business Plan objective that we need to evaluate is to “Enhance current and future leadership through a comprehensive pathway”. All programmes are evaluated using an online form after each module for participant feedback. This asks for immediate feedback on the session and is shared with facilitators and supports them in refining their delivery. At the end of the programme, a detailed end-of-programme evaluation following the ‘Kirk Patrick’ model has been developed. It has been created to capture whether the programmes’ aims were met, the impact

on the participant as a leader and the impact on pupils. These are analysed and inform development and next steps.

All programmes (middle leader through to NPQH) have a core element where the participant undertakes a 'Leadership Experience task'. As well as developing their leadership skills through attendance at the development modules, they also have the opportunity to put this into practice by undertaking this Leadership Experience task. This is a whole-school project that the participant leads on and is linked closely to School Improvement Plans. This project is written up formally and presented to their peers as part of the assessment criteria for the programmes. The impact on pupils and how participants have developed as leaders is evidenced and evaluated. However, for NPQH candidates this element is also formally assessed at the panel interview stage.

## **8.2 Middle Leaders Development Programme**

### **8.2.1 What have we done this year?**

Our first cohort (Cohort 1) of middle leaders, who began the programme pre-Covid and paused for the summer term 2020, restarted the online programme in the autumn term 2020. Of the 108 original participants, 11 chose not to continue due to changes in circumstances and the added pressures of school at the time. All 97 remaining participants completed the programme by the end of the spring term 2021. A new cohort (Cohort 2) started in January 2021 with 70 participants.

As part of a wider strategy to support Merthyr schools, the 'Raising Aspirations, Raising Standards Strategy' (RARS), we also developed a bespoke model of this programme for a cohort of Merthyr secondary school middle leaders. The need to develop leadership skills and collaboration was identified. Working in partnership with local authority officers, improvement partners, school leaders and facilitators, a programme has been developed for delivery in the spring and summer terms 2021.

### **8.2.2 What evidence of impact do we have?**

As of 31st March 2021, the first cohort of the Middle Leader Programme had been completed. This has been formally evaluated and a report was written (see below). Key findings were extremely positive:

- From the data, it was clear that overall participants met the intended aims of the programme.
- 100% of participants would recommend the programme to a colleague.
- 100% of participants stated that the training met their expectations.

### **8.3.3 Next steps**

- **To continue to evaluate the Middle Leaders Programme and make refinements to the programme in light of feedback and educational developments. For example, refining the**

online delivery to make use of the facilitators developing skills in this area; to include updates to curriculum roll out and the ALN agenda.

- **Submit Middle Leaders Programme for re-endorsement from National Academy Education Leadership (NAEL).**

### **8.3 Senior Leader Development Programme**

#### **8.3.1 Background and objectives**

During the autumn term (2020), development of the new Senior Leader Programme continued. A national writing group, which included CSC representatives, was established to create and develop the modules for this programme. Facilitators were trained across our region and the programme was launched in January 2021 with 69 participants.

As this programme also offers participants the support of a leadership coach, we advertised and recruited additional coaches. These new coaches were able to access professional development in coaching and mentoring through the new 'National Coaching and Mentoring Programme'. This national programme provides comprehensive training and support for the coaches, ensuring that they are effective in their role. In the spring term 2021, the Senior Leader Programme was also successful in gaining endorsement from National Academy Education Leadership (NAEL).

#### **8.3.2 What evidence of impact do we have?**

Delegates on the Senior Leader Programme completed 2 of the 5 modules by March 2021. Although it is too early to evaluate the programme fully, an evaluation of programme feedback to date shows a rating of 4.87/5\* with extremely positive comments from participants. Where there were negative comments, they mostly referred to preferring in-person delivery but understanding the current need for training to be online. The programme has also met the threshold criteria for endorsement with NAEL, which reflects the high-quality content and delivery model.

#### **8.3.2 Next steps**

- **Evaluate the Senior Leader Programme at the end of Cohort 1.**
- **Evaluate the role of the coach in supporting the participant.**
- **Following evaluation, make amendments to the programme delivery and content as needed.**
- **Develop a longer-term evaluation of the programmes. There is confidence that the programmes have an immediate impact on participants from current evaluation activities. It is, however, important to look at the impact over time on leadership capabilities and pupil outcomes.**

### **8.4 Aspiring Headteacher Development Programme (Leading to NPQH)**

#### 8.4.1 Background and objectives

This is a new programme created by the cross-regional leadership group at the request of Welsh Government, to provide development modules that prepare participants for NPQH assessment and first years of headship. This programme was due to start in March 2020. In agreement with Welsh Government, the Aspiring Headteacher Development Programme was paused until January 2021, to allow for an assessment-only model for NPQH. In total, 63 participants started the programme in the spring term 2021, completing 2 of the development modules and also received the support of a leadership coach. These participants will be assessed for NPQH in January 2022.

#### 8.4.2 What evidence of impact do we have?

The first cohort of the Aspiring Headteacher Development Programme has completed 2 of the 5 modules. Although it is too early to evaluate the programme fully, an evaluation of programme feedback to date shows a rating of 4.69/5\* with extremely positive comments from participants.

#### 8.4.3 Next steps

**Evaluate the Aspiring Headteacher Development Programme at the end of Cohort 1.**

### 8.5 National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH)

#### 8.5.1 Background and objectives

The assessment criteria for NPQH were updated, reflecting the current Covid situation and ensuring the questions asked would demonstrate a candidate's ability to meet the professional leadership standards. As the first cohort of Aspiring Headteachers (leading to NPQH) was paused due to Covid, an assessment-only model for NPQH was agreed with WG. These candidates were deemed as 'assessment ready' and not in need of the preparation the Aspiring Headteacher Development Programme provided. Briefing sessions were held and 27 applications were endorsed, and all allocated a coach. The assessment centre was held successfully online via Teams. 22 out of the 27 candidates met the criteria for assessment and achieved NPQH.

#### 8.5.2 What evidence of impact do we have?

NPQH assessment was successfully delivered online via Teams. 81% of candidates met the criteria (22 met/5 not yet met).

*Table 9: National Picture*

NPQH 2021	MET	NOT YET MET	% MET
ERW	15	1	94%
GWE	7	2	78%
EAS	6	2	75%
CSC	22	5	81%
<b>Total</b>	50	10	83%

Of the 5 CSC candidates who had not yet met, there was no pattern in the reasons. All have received detailed feedback.

### **Career Progression**

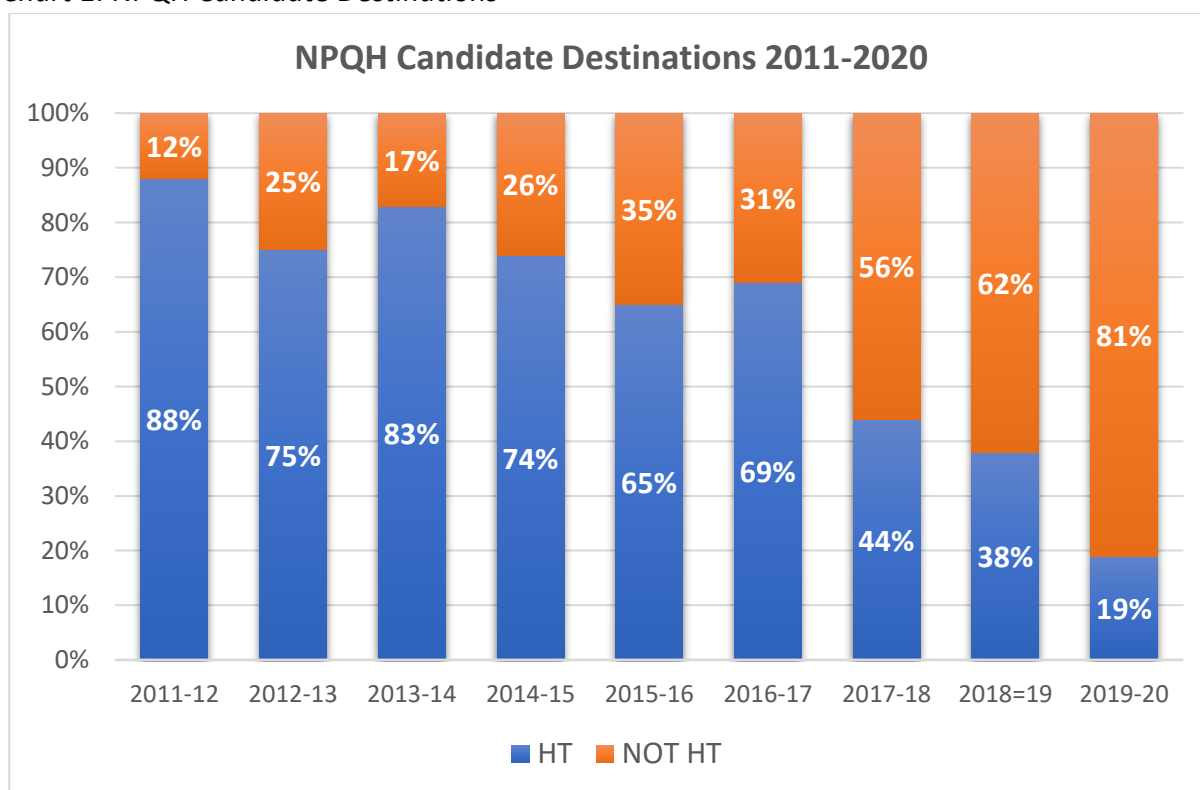
Since 2011, analysis has been carried out of NPQH candidates moving into headship positions.

319 candidates have gained NPQH in CSC since 2011:

- 57% have since gained a headteacher post
- 43% have not gained headship to date and are in other posts for example as deputy headteachers or improvement partners, or have retired.

However, the picture is far more positive if it is broken down into the year groups that the qualification was obtained.

*Chart 1: NPQH Candidate Destinations*



If we look at the group that has held NPQH for 3 years or more:

184 candidates have gained NPQH in CSC 2011-17

- 73% have since gained a headteacher post

- 27% have not gained headship to date and are in other posts for example as deputy headteachers or improvement partners, or have retired.

Conclusion: Candidates with the NPQH are gaining a position as headteacher after a few years of holding the qualification.

### **8.5.3 Next steps**

**Review NPQH assessment criteria to ensure it reflects current practice.**

## **8.6 New and Acting Headteacher Programme**

### **8.6.1 Background and objectives**

The New and Acting Headteacher Programme started in autumn 2019 with a cohort of 28 headteachers. This was paused in March 2020 and the programme restarted in the autumn term 2020. As the next new cohort (again of 28 headteachers) would also be starting in the autumn term 2020, both cohorts were run simultaneously. Both cohorts have completed 3 of the 5 modules and received the support of a leadership coach. The remaining modules will be completed in the summer term 2021.

### **8.6.2 What evidence of impact do we have?**

Both cohorts 2 and 3 of the New and Acting Headteacher Programme were successfully merged for training and completed 3 of the 5 modules by 31<sup>st</sup> March. An end-of-programme evaluation will be available in July 2021. However, an evaluation of programme feedback to date showed that 100% agreed/strongly agreed that the content was relevant and engaging. Feedback to date shows a rating of 4.16/5\*.

### **8.6.3 Next steps**

- **Review current format of New and Acting Headteacher Programme, acting on feedback.**
- **Submit New and Acting Headteacher Programme for re-endorsement from NAEL.**

## **8.7 Experienced Headteacher Programme**

### **8.7.1 Background and objectives**

The Experienced Headteacher Programme started in January 2020 and was delivered by an external company. This was paused due to Covid and, as it was mostly delivered via residential sessions, it was more difficult to develop into an online programme. As of 31st March 2021, this programme was still being rewritten into online modules and expected to be restarted in the summer term 2021.

### **8.7.2 What evidence of impact do we have?**



The Experienced Headteacher Programme remains paused so has had little impact on the participants to date.

### **8.7.3 Next steps**

**Restart Experienced Headteacher Programme.**

### **8.8 System Leaders Programme**

Develop a pilot 'System Leader Programme' in CSC. Based on our own self-evaluation we have identified a need to refine and enhance our support for schools whilst developing the skills of the system leaders.

Please see Appendix D for case study.

## 9.0 CONCLUSION

In 2020-21 there was a further 1% reduction in core funding from the previous year level. In addition, the region had an increase in pupil numbers of 843, which subsequently reduced spend per pupil.

*Table 10: Comparison of Core Expenditure per Pupil From 2016-17 to 2020-21*

	2016–2017	2017–2018	2018–2019	2019–2020	2020–2021
LA contributions	£4,195,662	£3,985,879	£3,906,161	£3,710,853	£3,599,528
Pupil numbers	146,711	147,236	147,697	148,683	149,526
Spend per pupil	£28.60	£27.07	£26.45	£24.96	£23.35

The vision for a school-led, self-improving system has meant that delegation rates to schools for grant-funded activity have increased from a rate of 94.4% in 2016-17 to 95.6% in 2017-18, 93.2% in 2019-20, however slightly decreasing to 95.1% in 2020-21. This has been achieved through the continuation of effective deployment of the formerly named Education Improvement Grant (EIG).

During 2020-21, there continued to be some cross-subsidisation across the five LAs. Monetary benefits of regional working were achieved by Bridgend, Cardiff and Merthyr Tydfil but the additional benefits of working regionally can also be seen in the impact on outcomes across the region.

CSC continues to provide a regional school improvement service which combines resources allowing for economies of scale to be realised. Regional working also ensures a consistent service to schools and allows for a more flexible deployment of staff to respond to crises as they arise. Operating regionally also encourages the recruitment of high calibre staff, with opportunities for professional development across a wider geographical region and, in addition, access to high-quality Professional Learning.

Evaluations of ongoing work are reported to key groups within the governance structure of CSC as part of the work of the Research and Evaluation Board. This enables CSC to respond quickly to any identified concerns with service delivery, and ensures that effective self-evaluation processes are in place. The organisation is currently mapping all self-evaluation processes to ensure that all intelligence is used effectively to support future planning, with the sharing of a self-evaluation report in the spring term 2022.

Through the improved self-evaluation processes and the increased capacity provided by the research and evaluation board, evidence of impact and effective practice has been highlighted within the separate strand reports. Each area has identified the appropriate next steps to ensure

that the activities undertaken within each strand of work result in improvements in impact at both the programme level as well as a regional level.

## **10.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

CSC commits to taking the following next steps as identified within the strand evaluations in the report.

### **10.1 Governors**

- Promote the use of the Governing Body Self-Evaluation Toolkit across CSC.
- Refine the governor survey to help inform the professional learning offer for governors moving forward.
- Further develop collaboration opportunities between the Governor Leads and the Governor Steering Group to inform the strategic direction of governance across the region.
- Ensure the RLGs are appropriately and widely deployed to meet governance needs across schools.
- Develop the coaching and mentoring skills of the RLG group.

### **10.2 Digital Learning**

- Further develop cross-curricular digital skills (DCF)
- Exemplify innovative and creative use of digital skills in cross-curricular contexts
- Provide materials to support the development of digital skills within the foundation phase
- Highlight the collaborative features of digital technology and develop the skills of practitioners to use these features
- Showcase effective practice of digital learning and develop its use to support future teaching & learning
- Develop resources (in collaboration with schools) to support the new Digital Technology GCSE

### **10.3 Early Career Pathway**

- Further develop professional learning for NQTs in line with Professor Mick Waters' report on induction: *Learning to be a teacher for Wales: the induction of teachers into the profession'*
- Continue to ensure consistency of messaging at national and regional levels
- Develop enhanced professional learning for induction mentors
- Facilitate additional support for external verifiers
- Continue to develop bridging collaborations between ITE and induction
- Develop further collaboration opportunities with HEIs
- Develop the voice of the NQT to inform refinements of the programmes of support
- Incorporate professional learning for CSC staff on the resources and support available to ITE schools/ mentors, NQTs and induction mentors

#### **10.4 Leadership Support and Development**

- To continue to develop evaluation processes across all programmes to examine the longer-term impact of programmes of professional learning, including examination of destination data
- Develop programmes of professional learning which reflect the areas for improvement identifies within evaluations
- Review NPQH assessment criteria to ensure that it reflects current practice
- Review, refine and resubmit New and Acting Headteacher Programme for re-endorsement from NAEL
- Restart Experienced Headteacher Programme

Finally, CSC will continue to provide an annual effectiveness and efficiency report to Members of the Joint Committee in the autumn term each year. This report will form the basis of the reports to local authority annual scrutiny committees.

Strand evaluations for 2021-22 should continue for the following areas to track the impact of the initiatives identified:

- Support for Governors
- Digital Learning
- Early Career Pathways
- Leadership Support and Development

## Case Study – Support for Governors (Reflections of a Governor)

### School Context

Caedraw Primary School is a successful school situated at the lower end of Merthyr Tydfil set in pleasant grounds next to St Tydfil's church, near the town centre. The school is positioned within the town area which places it among the 10-20% most deprived areas in Wales. However, a minority of the children in school come from many other areas of Merthyr outside the school's traditional catchment area. There are currently 250 children between 3 and 11 years old on roll, including 33 nursery age children. They are divided into ten classes, two of which are special educational needs resource base classes. Pupils in the resource base classes have a range of social and communication needs.

The average proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals over the last three years is around 20%. This is close to the national average of 21%. Around 12% of children are from a black, Asian or minority ethnic background and 7% speak English as an additional language. The school has identified 22% of its pupils as having additional learning needs, which is above the national average of 20%. Around 6% of these have a statement of special educational needs. The headteacher took up his post in March 2017 and the school was last inspected in May 2018.

Governors have a range of experience and come from a variety of backgrounds. In the most recent Estyn report it said '*Governors are supportive of the school and well-informed about its performance in comparison to similar schools. Most governors visit the school regularly and carry out a purposeful range of activities, for example, learning walks. As a result, governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They use this information effectively to challenge the school about its performance and members draw on their expertise, such as financial management, to provide additional support for the senior management team*'.

### Background

I was lucky enough to be invited to be a member of the working group set up by Central South Consortium to develop a tool for governing bodies to assist them in evaluating their current practice by identifying any strengths alongside any areas for development.

Our school was selected as a pilot to trial the new Self-Evaluation Tool and feed back our conclusions prior to rollout across the consortium. Representatives from the GB attended the Merthyr Tydfil briefing session for pilots and we were ready to get going. Unfortunately, Covid 19 struck and, rightly so, everything of a non-urgent nature was put on hold.

The structure of our Governing Body meetings was already well established a number of years earlier whereby whole GB meetings take place half-termly - each term includes an 'LA Focus' meeting and also a 'School Focus' meeting. There is also a long-established Senior Strategic Leaders Group (SSLG) monthly meeting where the Headteacher, Chair and Vice-Chair of the GB meet to

discuss priorities and steer the work to be undertaken to ensure that we focus clearly on the most important use of our time.

After many months of delay, the SSLG decided that we would be able to begin the process of self-evaluation via virtual Microsoft Teams meetings rather than 'sit' on the tool for any longer. A timeframe was agreed and a plan was made of how best to set about this task bearing in mind the Covid restrictions and the fact that we had four new governors in place. The only exposure they had had to the working of the GB was through their induction meeting.

### **Key Decision**

**The SSLG agreed to undertake the whole of the Self-Evaluation Tool on behalf of the GB in the first instance. The outcomes would then be shared with all governors for further discussion, further comment and further input before final judgements were agreed and formally recorded.**

**Crucially, furthermore, the SSLG saw this method as a means to evaluating the accuracy of their perceptions of how well the GB was functioning and was viewed as an effective use of our time to collect a benchmark for future improvement.**

**The important thing to us was to get going and not waste any more valuable time!**

### **Activities**

#### **SSLG Activities**

January 2021 – Initial meeting held virtually to:

- a. Decide the timeframe to undertake the criteria from the self-evaluation tool.
- b. Agree the method for completion.
- c. Stress the importance of honesty when scoring to ensure a rigorous and robust approach.
- d. Plan next steps.

January 2021 – Online full GB meeting held where the CSC Self-Evaluation Tool was shared and fully explained to members. The decision of how Caedraw was going to approach tackling the tool was explained fully and members were asked for comments.

January 2021 – Two meetings held online where:

- e. Detailed discussions took place on each of the criteria for the Areas of Governance 1 to 8 and subsequently 9 to 17.
- f. Each member of the SSLG had individually scored the criteria from 1 to 4 prior to the session.
- g. Justifications for scores were discussed and agreement reached.
- h. Scores were entered into the tool to serve as a baseline for our improvement.

February 2021 – Priorities were established and agreed, all of which arose from the criteria where a judgement of 1 was awarded (not yet in place).

February and March 2021 – ‘Routes to Improvement’ were devised which created an evidence trail of our steps undertaken to address the identified aspects for improvement. This ‘Routes to Improvement’ identified the method by which we would need to tackle our shortcomings.

### **Whole GB Activities**

April 2021 – Virtual whole GB school focus meeting held where:

- a) All actions undertaken to date were shared fully.
- b) The Self-Evaluation Tool with scoring included was shared on screen.
- c) Opportunities for further clarification, justification and explanations were provided before any alterations would be recorded.

**N.B. It is worth noting that no alterations were required with all members fully included and in agreement at this stage of the process.**

April 2021 – Having reached agreement from the whole GB it was now deemed appropriate that the ‘Action Plan’ section of the tool could be completed.

May to September 2021 – Continued actions and reflection.

October 2021 – The SSLG undertook an interim informal reflection by looking at the judgements recorded in January to establish where progress has been achieved to date.

### **OUR ROUTES TO IMPROVEMENT**

These included the following documents which served as an essential part of our process and supported our evidence base:

- A record of the 2 initial discussions gathering the scores allocated together with the justification for these.
- A simple grid illustrating the variety of methods we identified to improve our practice as a GB which proved to be an invaluable reference point.
- A ‘New Process’ sheet identifying what needed to be newly established and the ‘HOW’ this would be achieved.
- A table indicating items to be included as ‘Standard Agenda Items’ from now on as well as a table indicating ‘Additional Headings’ to be included into the HT report to governors.

### **Impact**

The undertaking of this process using this fantastic resource has placed our GB in an extremely strong position. The accompanying evidence serves us well to demonstrate to others the steps we have undertaken to seek and establish improvement.

The trust and collaboration among members of the GB as a result of undertaking such a thorough, detailed tool has grown. Transparency has been a crucial element throughout.

Our confidence has increased to such an extent that we can categorically state that the GB of Caedraw Primary School is having a positive impact on the work of the school and the pupils.

Our informal revisit of the scoring undertaken in October demonstrated that very good progress has already been achieved with no judgement of 'Not yet in place' now necessary.

The GB will definitely continue to direct its work by focusing on the right things for us in our school through the continued engagement with the CSC Self-Evaluation Tool.

We will continue to share the good practice to other relevant partners such as

- The Central South Consortium
- The Central South Consortium Governor Stakeholder Group
- The Merthyr Tydfil Governors Association
- Merthyr Tydfil Local Authority
- The Cyfarthfa Cluster Governor Improvement Group (GIG)

### **Next Steps**

1. Following the interim informal reflection undertaken in October 2021 we intend to conduct a formal review in February 2022, which will involve all members of the GB, by updating the Self-Evaluation Tool and recording revised scores.
2. We will ensure that the 'new processes' that were adopted become embedded into practice, especially the new Terms of References for individual governors and for our committees.
3. We will repeat the cycle established from year 1 and set a timeframe of dates for action and reflection once again.
4. We will continue to address the lower scoring criteria identified by devising appropriate methods to elicit further improvement.
5. We intend to ensure that a strong evidence base continues to be gathered.
6. We will incorporate the use of the Self-Evaluation Tool into our annual Governor Improvement Plan (GIP) with an accompanying measurable target.

**Our overall aim is to continue to work towards functioning as an efficient and effective Governing Body from now on regardless of any changes in membership nor any new Welsh Government or Local Initiatives which come our way. The continued regular use of this Self-Evaluation tool will unquestionably support us to achieve this.**



### Case Study – Digital Learning (Headteacher Reflections: post review)

Between November and December 2020, we received support from the Digital Team within CSC. The aim was to deepen our understanding of how best to support our learners through digital platforms. (Distance Learning)

#### Strengths:

- Support from the Digital Team was recommended during Improvement Partner discussion. – Clear communication and expertise in terms of knowing who is available within CSC to support our school needs.
- We were quickly able to discuss the training options to best fit our needs and arrange a date for staff training.
- Training was clear and informative. It demonstrated a variety of options. We were supported in setting up our Classrooms.
- Training was at an appropriate level. It was informal and allowed for developmental dialogue between the CSC Team member and staff.
- The training played a key role in allowing school to broaden our blended learning offer. – To include live sessions and check-ins.
- We were also able to disseminate relevant digital skills and information to upskill our Teaching Assistants. – Allowing them to continue to provide Intervention support during lockdown, via a distance learning approach.
- We quickly developed confidence and our approach to blended and distance learning developed. By January 2021 all teachers and teaching assistants were using a greater range of digital tools to support our children at home. Including live sessions and pre-recorded lessons.
- As a result, in February 2021 we were asked to provide a webinar for Central South on overcoming barriers to Blended Learning.
- We transitioned to using live Pupil Trackers on Hwb, to track engagement during times of distance learning. This resulted in double the levels of engagement across school by February 2021, compared to Summer 2020 (an average of 85%).
- Self-evaluation shows that since returning to school in March 2021 children and teachers continue to use Hwb Classrooms and utilise their new skills and the skills of the children. They access some of their learning in this way in school now too!

#### Areas for development:

- For us as a school, in the future we need to look at how to continue to develop our digital knowledge and skills so that we can continue to improve the outcomes for pupils.

### Case Study: Early Career Pathway (Think Like a Teacher Programme)

“Observing other teachers is a key part of development; it improves teachers’ own self-awareness of their skills and also makes managers more effective at identifying areas for further growth.” (Gore, 2013)

Early career teachers can gain much from “experienced teachers who, when planning, often draw on knowledge rooted in their experience” (Mutton et al, 2011)

In light of the above research, an initiative to support student and newly qualified teachers who had had little face-to-face school experience was initiated. Fifteen experienced practitioners worked with members of CSC to create playlists wherein they ‘unpicked’ the ways in which they plan, deliver, assess and feedback on learning experiences. Additionally, since this was a cross-regional project, a further nine schools from EAS also contributed playlists.

Their honest reflections and the rich resources they created (including videos, voiceover PowerPoints, photographs, recordings of lessons and learners talking) went some way to compensate students and NQTs who had not been able to observe the practice of more experienced teachers.

A guidance document was created to accompany the 24 playlists, summarising them and ‘tagging’ them with key words for ease of access to the aspects of learning and teaching most relevant to the user at any time.

The audiences for the Think Like A Teacher playlists are:

- Induction mentors wishing to demonstrate practice in relation to coaching/mentoring conversations and target setting
- NQTs seeking to address their targets and the development areas in their Career Entry Profiles
- ITE mentors both in university and schools

The ‘Think Like A Teacher Guidance’ can be accessed [here](#).

**Case Study - Leadership Support and Development (Example end-of-programme evaluation)**

**Evaluation – Middle Leaders Development Programme**

**Purpose:**

The National Middle Leaders Development Programme is available to all middle leaders across Wales who have areas of responsibility and/or line manage staff. The programme promotes highly effective leadership through self-evaluation and reflection, exploring the relationships between leadership, successful schools and the wider community.

As part of the professional learning continuum, participants will through this programme:

- develop an understanding of the role
- further develop their understanding of the national reform agenda
- develop their practice within the formal leadership standards

**Delivery method**

There are core modules (5 days equivalent) that allow the participant to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding to become an effective school leader. The delivery of the Middle Leaders Development Programme includes mentoring, peer support networks and an individual leadership standards self-review. In addition, each participant will undertake a leadership experience task utilising the most recent research findings in developing their leadership skills. This is presented to peers on the programme on day 5.

Starting in September 2019 we had 7 cohorts delivering to 108 participants across CSC – 6 English-medium cohorts and 1 Welsh-medium. The programme was facilitated by trained staff in Cardiff High, Romilly Primary and Ysgol Pencae.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the programme was paused in March and restarted as an online programme in September 2020. Each 'day' of training was divided into 2 two-hour sessions with inter-sessional tasks to complete. All groups finished the 5-day programme by March 2021.

**Participant numbers:**

Of the 108 original participants, 11 chose not to continue due to changes in circumstances and the added pressures of school at the time.

**Next steps for participants:**

The programme will offer accreditation options in partnership with UWTSO and Bangor universities starting September 2021 for this cohort.

Participants will embed the skills gained in the programme and progress onto the senior leader development programme when ready.

**Evaluation:**

Participants complete evaluations following each session that are shared with facilitators to improve content. This report is based on an end-of-programme evaluation that was sent to all participants. A copy of the evaluation can be found here -

[https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=Uq4\\_TzS3ZEGUCRtgHRR5k2MTVbIVfoVGrpXL1tblo0dUMjBKVVAYQIJTWkhERVZMNIJZWUw5QTdXVS4u](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=Uq4_TzS3ZEGUCRtgHRR5k2MTVbIVfoVGrpXL1tblo0dUMjBKVVAYQIJTWkhERVZMNIJZWUw5QTdXVS4u)

*68 replies were received from 97 participants*

Level		Evaluation
1	<p><b>Reaction</b></p> <p>Participant initial reaction to training.</p>	<p>Candidates were asked to rate how confident they were in their knowledge and understanding of the key aims of the programme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The role of the middle leader – 42.6% were confident/ 57.5% were very confident</li> <li>b. The national reform agenda – 8.8% were a little more confident/ 67.6% were confident/ 23.5% were very confident.</li> <li>c. The professional leadership standards – 7.4% were a little more confident/ 61.8% were confident/ 30.9% were very confident.</li> </ul> <p><b>From this data it is clear that, overall, participants met the intended aims of the programme.</b></p> <p>Participants were asked what the best part of the programme was. Here is a summary of the common themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I really enjoyed and valued the discussions at every session and being able to speak to other professionals from different schools to hear their experiences and perspectives.</li> <li>• Opportunity to reflect on practice as a manager and leader in an interactive and informative setting, with innovative and inspiring facilitators.</li> <li>• I thoroughly enjoyed all aspects, but I particularly enjoyed finding out what type of leader I was and how to deal with difficult conversations. I also found the SIP exercise really beneficial.</li> <li>• Working collaboratively with colleagues from a range of different schools and key stages.</li> </ul>

		<p>Participants were asked what improvements could be made, here is a summary of the common themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It would be good to have a session a year after finishing to discuss and evaluate impact of the programme and see where people have developed.</li> <li>• Perhaps a continuation: what next?</li> <li>• I cannot think of anything that could be done better. It was an excellent course that was superbly run, and I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to have taken part.</li> <li>• The return of face-to-face training, although the Teams sessions were successful.</li> <li>• More time discussing our leadership experience task.</li> </ul> <p><b>100% of participants would recommend the programme to a colleague.</b></p>
2	<p><b>Learning</b></p> <p>Information effectively understood from activity. Learning intentions met.</p>	<p><b>100% of participants stated that the training met their expectations.</b></p> <p>Leadership Experience task: As part of the programme, candidates had to complete a 'Leadership Experience task', a project linked to school priorities that they lead. 78% of respondents to the evaluation completed and presented their Leadership Experience task. Due to the disruption in school, 22% were unable to undertake or complete what had been planned. Although this is a key element of learning in the programme, this has been unavoidable and should not be a feature of subsequent cohorts.</p> <p>The leadership tasks covered a wide range of themes including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leading practice for new ALN Bill</li> <li>• Developing wellbeing through Covid lockdowns and restrictions</li> <li>• Embedding the four purposes across the school</li> <li>• To develop our partnership and network links with the new ITE programme at UWTSD.</li> </ul>

<p>3</p>	<p><b>Behaviour</b></p> <p>Professional learning has influenced the behaviour of participants.</p>	<p>Participants were asked to give examples of how they have improved as a leader:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The programme allowed me to learn about action plans as well as how to implement them.</li> <li>• Gave me the confidence to lead and manage a team. Gave me opportunity to reflect my own skills and attributes as well as those that still need further development.</li> <li>• It allowed me to see the place of strategy, the importance of keeping pupils and pupils at the centre of everything a school does and my own strengths and weaknesses as a leader.</li> <li>• I feel more confident with the National Reform Agenda and understand the whole picture of the changes in Wales.</li> <li>• It has provided me with skills needed within my ALNCo role e.g., being an active listener, data analysis within my strategic role and giving feedback etc.</li> </ul> <p><b>There were many inspirational examples given that show the personal impact that the programme has had on participants.</b></p> <p>Of the participants who completed the Leadership Experience task 88% have shared or intend to share their Leadership Experience task with their organisation e.g. Senior Leadership Team/GB/Staff.</p>
<p>4</p>	<p><b>Results</b></p> <p>The impact professional learning has had on the outcomes of learners.</p>	<p>Participants were asked what impact their Leadership Experience task had on pupils:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The whole school were able to benefit from the actions put in place to deliver effective and high-standard home learning as well as feedback and the ability to improve or work on the next steps.</li> <li>• Better quality differentiation and ALN provision especially for those children with Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD).</li> <li>• There has been a measurable rise in attainment across the age phases. Also, most pupils when questioned stated that since the introduction of 'Big Maths' they now enjoy mathematics much more than they did before.</li> <li>• None as yet due to lockdown but it's preparing staff for forthcoming new ALN Bill changes.</li> </ul>

	<p><b>There were many examples given that show the impact (or expected impact) on pupils.</b></p>
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**Reflections from a headteacher: Impact of leadership courses within a school**

As a school, we have benefitted greatly from the range of leadership courses available. I (as headteacher) have accessed the 'New to Headship Course', my deputy is currently undertaking the 'Aspiring Heads Course leading to the NPQH', one member of staff has completed the 'Middle Leadership Development Programme' and another has just started the MLD Programme.

When I reflect on my first two years as a headteacher, I feel that nothing really prepared me for the role and the day-to-day challenges that it has brought. As such, I feel privileged to have been involved with the 'New to Headship' course and feel that the knowledge and opportunities that this course provided have aided me on my leadership journey.

Through the course, I was provided with opportunities:

- To develop my own skills and knowledge of strategic practices (Inc. strategies and structures) that I have since been able to implement within the school environment and further lead the school on its improvement journey
- To take time for my own learning and professional development and feel supported within my new role
- To build relationships with other headteachers who were in the same situation – the opportunities to network and share experiences have been invaluable as many of us were experiencing similar things

Personally, through discussions with others on the course, I have learnt that:

- It is okay not to know everything and it is okay to ask for help/support and advice
- The importance of prioritising tasks, as it's impossible to get it all done
- That building a team of support around yourself and the school is invaluable practice

Through being able to access the other Leadership Programmes we have been able to develop strength of leadership in the school, which was greatly needed.

My deputy has spoken about the relationships she is building through the 'Aspiring Headteachers' course and the opportunities of networking with other deputies who are on the same leadership journey. She has found the guest speakers (experienced headteachers) very inspiring and has talked about learning from them and the aspiration that this has provided to continue on her leadership journey. She has gained confidence in suggesting ideas to support strategic practices which have been discussed through some of her modules. Most importantly, through discussions with her I feel that this course is providing deputies with an oversight of

the role of the headteacher and giving them knowledge of process (e.g. budget) that were not on the original NPQH. Through this course, the deputy has gained confidence, knowledge and skills to further support her leadership ability.

Similar things could be said about the Middle Leadership Development Course. The member of staff that attended the course has since progressed to lead one of our main school improvement priorities this year – ‘Development of Foundation Phase’. Without the project on the MLD course of leading an aspect of school improvement, I do not believe that she would have had the knowledge, skills or confidence to apply for this temporary TLR within the school.

Overall, although it is still early days I believe that these courses have developed the much-needed skills and knowledge of staff to contribute to and to lead aspects of school improvement. As such, our distributed leadership has improved as priorities are being led and driven from within rather than always coming from the top. I believe these courses have given staff a more confident voice and have made them look at themselves as leaders and capable of influencing the change needed.