



Consortiwm Canolbarth y De
Central South Consortium



Gwasanaeth Addysg ar y Cyd
Joint Education Service

Financial Year Scrutiny Report

Central South Consortium

2022-23



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1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

The Annual Financial Year report is designed to provide Local Authorities (LAs), schools, Welsh Government (WG) and other stakeholders with a clear and comprehensive report on the progress & impact of the CSC Business Plan 2022/23 as well as a summary of the value for money provided by CSC.

2.0 BACKGROUND

Since 2012, CSC has delivered aspects of school improvement services on behalf of the five local authorities: Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf and the Vale of Glamorgan. This covers 380 schools, around 32% of Wales's children. It is a growing region with rapidly changing demographic encompassing increasingly diverse communities across the economic sub region. It remains the region with the highest number of children living in poverty¹, with around 25% claiming free school meals.

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

The consortium Business Plan for April 2022 to March 2025 can be found [here](#).

A midyear report is provided to stakeholders and a copy of that report can be found [here](#). In addition, a report covering the previous academic year is provided to individual LAs and presented to scrutiny committees within each LA.

CSC evaluates its performance through self-evaluation processes that form the basis for business planning and monitoring activities. LA meetings are held regularly with the Executive Leadership Team (ELT), 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 executive leadership team and PIPs attend each council's Education Scrutiny Committee meetings at least once per year and attend other scrutiny meetings on request.

Scrutiny and challenge are undertaken by the members of the CSC Management Board, that meets monthly 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.

¹ <https://www.childreninwales.org.uk/news/end-child-poverty-child-poverty-statistics/>

3.0 PROGRESS WITH CSC BUSINESS PLAN APRIL 2022 – MARCH 2023

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

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

CSC has a thorough cycle of self-evaluation which includes challenging the impact and progress that has been made with the business plan. Members of the senior leadership team within CSC drive forward the work of each priority areas and are known as 'Drive Teams'. On a half yearly basis, the drive team are challenged on their performance by the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) within CSC as well as Directors of Education from the LAs. A summary of the progress made against the business plan for 2022/23 is outlined below.

Table 1: Summary of progress judgement by individual aspect areas

Priority	Priority Area	No. of Actions	Not Yet Started	Limited Progress	Satisfactory Progress	Strong Progress	Very Good Progress
Curriculum, Teaching and Assessment	1.1	2	0	0	1	1	0
	1.2	4	0	0	1	2	1
	1.3	7	0	0	2	5	0
	1.4	1	0	0	0	0	1
	1.5	6	1	0	0	2	3
	1.6	1	0	0	0	0	1
	1.7	3	0	0	0	0	3
	1.8	1	0	0	1	0	0
	1.9	1	0	0	0	0	1
Leadership	2.1	12	0	0	1	7	4
	2.2	19	0	0	0	2	17
	2.3	16	3	3	0	6	4
	2.4	6	1	0	2	2	1
	2.5	5	0	0	0	2	3
	2.6	1	0	0	1	0	0
	2.7	1	0	0	1	0	0
	2.8	1	1	0	0	0	0
	2.9	1	0	0	1	0	0
Equity and Wellbeing	3.1	1	0	0	0	1	0
	3.2	8	0	2	3	3	0
	3.3	3	0	0	2	1	0
School	4.1	2	1	0	0	1	0

Improvement	4.2	3	0	0	0	3	0
	4.3	2	0	0	0	2	0
Effectiveness and efficiency of CSC	5.1	4	0	0	0	1	3
	5.2	9	0	0	1	2	6
	5.3	3	0	0	0	0	3
	5.4	6	0	0	0	2	4
	5.5	3	0	0	0	1	2
	5.6	4	0	0	0	0	4
	5.7	2	1	0	1	0	0
Totals		138	8	5	18	46	61

(See **Appendix A** for Judgement Matrix)

Table 2 below indicates between April 2022 and March 2023 there has been:

- Very Good or Strong Progress made in 77% of elements within the business plan.
- Satisfactory Progress made in 13% of elements.
- Limited Progress made in 4% of elements. One element was delayed due to limited attendance caused by pressures in school. All other elements will continue into next years' operational plans.
- 6% of elements have Not Yet Started. Half (50%) if these elements have been removed from the operation plans as they are no longer required, and budgets have been released where appropriate. Other elements are continuing into next years' operational plans or have not started due to delays with instruction from Welsh Government or internal time constraints.

Table 2: Cumulative progress judgement

Annual Summary 2022- 2023						
Business Plan Actions	Elements	Not Yet Started	Limited Progress	Satisfactory Progress	Strong Progress	Very Good Progress
Totals	138	8	5	18	46	61
Percentages	100%	6%	4%	13%	33%	44%

3.1 Identification of Risks

Following monitoring meetings and impact review meetings, operational risks and barriers are identified and shared with members of CSC Executive Leadership Team (ELT) for consideration. Risk holders review and make recommendations to ELT on how to respond to the risks and the proposed actions for mitigation. Members of ELT then review the corporate risk register to consider making proposals for change to the corporate risk register. CSC Management Board review and make final recommendations to Joint Committee to changes to the CSC risk register.

3.2 April 2022 – March 2023 Impact Evaluation

Following the final round of impact review meetings, drive teams have provided the following evidence to support progress and impact of the work undertaken in the business plan 2022/2023. The detail

provided below provides a high-level summary of progress. Detailed progress and impact has been shared with and challenged by members of ELT as well as Directors of Education in the Local Authorities.

3.2.1 Priority 1: Curriculum, Teaching & Assessment

<p>Curriculum, Teaching & Assessment</p> <p>Success Measures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A comprehensive offer, informed by partnership working with schools and wider stakeholders, is available to support schools to develop their curriculum in all areas.</i> • <i>All PL is evaluated using the Kirkpatrick model which informs future planning</i> • <i>Nearly all schools engage in curriculum, teaching and learning PL opportunities.</i> • <i>Many practitioners engaged in curriculum, teaching and learning PL report that it will develop their practice/behaviour.</i> • <i>There will be an increased level of engagement in CSC Welsh language development PL and most practitioners engaged report that they have improved Welsh language competence and skills.</i> • <i>The number of schools achieving progressive levels of Siarter Iaith / Cymraeg Campus increases in line with targets.</i> • <i>The majority of schools report that they regularly use enquiry to support school improvement priorities.</i>
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<p>Curriculum, Teaching & Assessment</p> <p>Impact</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A comprehensive and responsive professional learning (PL) offer is in place to support schools. These opportunities continue to be refined and evolve to meet local, regional and national needs. The offer is delivered in partnership with lead practitioners, schools and local authorities. All PL continues to be informed by wider stakeholder partnership working and published research findings. • The Kirkpatrick model is embedded in the planning and evaluation of all regional PL and bespoke support. Following the refinement of the process, consistent approaches to area reports will provide opportunities to consolidate knowledge and further development of PL and bespoke support for schools. • 98.6% of schools have engaged in regional Curriculum, Teaching & Learning PL opportunities to date with 6,005 practitioners participating between April 2022 and February 2023. • 99.7% of schools have engaged in the overall regional PL offer to date with 10,024 practitioners participating between April 2022 and February 2023. • From evaluations received 92.6% of practitioners state that they intend to change their practice as a result of the PL, with 83% agreeing that the PL had enhanced their knowledge of the subject matter. • 652 practitioners have engaged in Welsh language development professional learning which is an increase from 2021/22. Most report that they have improved Welsh language competence and skills. • Since April 2022, 100 schools have achieving progressive levels of Siarter Iaith / Cymraeg Campus which is in line with targets. • Based on the annual school survey, over half of schools use research as part of PL on a regular basis, and over half are now engaged in extended forms of PL. This represents a small increase in the number of schools for both aspects.
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3.2.2 Priority 2: Leadership

<p>Leadership</p> <p>Success Measures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>All teaching assistants in the region have access to professional learning, guidance and resources, and the annual target of Teaching Assistants gaining HLTA is met.</i> • <i>Nearly all early career practitioners across the region have access to the professional learning, collaboration and support they need to be effective in their role and build capacity in the system.</i> • <i>Nearly all leaders across the region have access to the professional learning, collaboration and support they need to be effective in their role and build capacity in the system.</i> • <i>Successful completion of professional learning pathway programmes by nearly all participants that promote effective practice across the region.</i> • <i>All leaders across the region have access to professional learning opportunities to develop their coaching and mentoring skills.</i>
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<p>Leadership</p> <p>Impact</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Teaching Assistants (TA) in the region have had access to all relevant professional learning guidance and resources. The TA induction programme has been updated following feedback from practitioners and now meets the need of all new TAs. CSC has promoted professional learning as an entitlement for TAs appropriately and in line with NPLE strategy. Further work is being conducted to increase engagement with all TA programmes. All 29 candidates passed the HLTA assessment from Cylch 4 with 8 assessed through the medium of Welsh. • All NQTs eligible for the post induction offer were offered a wide variety of professional learning and support. Evaluations indicate a very positive response to this PL. As a result of improvements in communication with supply agencies, support for supply NQTs has been strengthened which has enabled 84% of supply NQTs to engage with resources and professional learning. Further work is required to overcome barriers to engagement and ensure an improved bespoke professional learning offer for supply NQTs. • All leaders have had access to the national leadership pathway programme. Participant evaluations have indicated that the content of these programmes has met their needs in the current climate of change and the national mission. All schools receive funding to support collaborative activities linked to their school improvement priorities. These include cluster, SIGs and school leader practitioner networks. • Many governors continue to engage with professional learning. Very good progress has been made in developing the mandatory elements of governor training within the new Governor Accredited Pathway to be piloted in Autumn 2023. Improvement Partners continue to offer support to Governing Bodies utilising the self-evaluation toolkit, support for HT Performance Management processes, deployment of regional leaders of governance and other forms of bespoke support. • The ever-evolving Cyfleoedd+ collaboration had been supported in adapting its processes focusing on enhancing leadership capacity, responding to the change of the Lead Headteacher effectively acting as the Link Improvement Partner and collating evidence of impact. Five out of five school to school collaborations have had funding profiled and agreed against their applications. • Nearly all participants have completed their relevant professional learning leadership pathway programmes. The experienced headteacher was postponed due to Covid-19 operational challenges and relaunched in a revised format in Spring 2023. Many candidates successfully met
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	<p>the standards for NPQH in 2023. There was a higher “not yet met” rate than in previous years due to reasons including the ongoing challenges related to Covid-19.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All school leaders including governors and practitioners have access to coaching and mentoring professional learning. Out of 384 schools across the region, 162 schools have engaged in the national coaching and mentoring programme and have at least one coach. A few of these are working towards formal qualification status.
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3.2.3 Priority 3: Equity & Wellbeing

<p>Equity & Wellbeing</p> <p>Success Measures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>CSC successfully enable all schools to engage with the principles of the Enabling Equity and Excellence and effectively identify and share strong practice to inform professional learning and support.</i> • <i>In partnership with all Local Authorities CSC successfully develops effective leadership and provision in schools to ensure the progress of vulnerable learners.</i> • <i>In partnership with stakeholders CSC successfully develop and deliver effective professional learning and collaboration to enhance the well-being of the workforce and learners.</i>
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<p>Equity & Wellbeing</p> <p>Impact</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A comprehensive five-year implementation plan is now in place in relation to the Central South Consortium (CSC) Enabling Equity and Excellence document. As part of phase one of the implementation plan, a group of schools from across the region are beginning to engage with the principles of the Equity and Excellence document through participation in a structured programme of professional learning. All CSC staff have engaged with sessions on the Equity and Excellence document. In the collaboration survey, 71% of schools reported they had engaged with the document with 54% of these schools stating that they used it to ask school improvement questions and 34% having used it to support school improvement planning. 53 governors from schools across the region attended CSC ‘Enabling Equity and Excellence’ Governor briefing sessions this year. As a result, an increasing number of governors are informed of the CSC’s regional approach to achieve equity and excellence and the key role that they play in supporting their schools in this ambitious agenda. • Partnership working with CSC and local authority officers in professional learning and support for schools is ongoing, in relation to both vulnerable learners and well-being. • Evaluation of the quality of planning and impact of the Pupil Development Grant (PDG) grant for 2021-22 by Improvement Partners in partnership with their schools demonstrate that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Most schools in CSC have effective Early Years Pupil Development Grant (EYPDG) plans with very few deemed as developing. - Many of the EYPDG plans were implemented and adapted effectively with few of the schools developing. - Most schools are effective in planning objectives within their PDG plans with very few developing. - Many PDG plans were implemented and adapted depending on the needs of the pupils with few of schools developing.
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- A majority of schools had effective impact with the use of the EYPDG grant with a minority developing. Very few schools were felt it was too early to determine the impact of their work.
- A majority of schools had an effective impact with the use of the PDG grant with a minority developing and with very few unable to determine the results yet.
- Most schools are using available resources effectively with a few developing
- In terms of PDG for Children Looked After (CLA PDG) cluster plans, 84% of evaluations received stated that the plan had been effective in their schools.
- A group of secondary schools from across the region have been piloting the Raising Achievement of Disadvantaged Youngsters (RADY) programme with Challenging Education. As a result, most schools in the group report an increased understanding of their knowledge about improving outcomes for disadvantaged learners. Of the evaluations received:
 - All schools report that the programme has improved their knowledge of working with disadvantaged learners
 - All schools report that they are using the knowledge they have gained
 - All schools have created long and short-term goals as a result of the work with the areas that have been influenced include leadership, teaching and learning and staff mindset
 - All schools wanted to continue to work with Challenging Education for another year to embed the work.
 - All schools in the region have access to the Challenging Education 'Thinking Differently for Disadvantaged Learners' online professional learning resources.
- 16 appreciative enquiries have taken place from across the region focusing on sharing innovative practice regarding vulnerable learners, exclusions and the whole school approach to emotional and mental well-being. An example of this would be the a cross-authority appreciative enquiry which focused on culture and ethos and how this has reduced exclusions. This was utilised as part of the Curriculum for Wales conference that CSC held for all schools across the region. The introduction of cross-authority appreciative enquiries is beginning to prove beneficial in developing a collective understanding of effective practices.
- 162 governors from schools across the region attended update sessions regarding the 'Whole school approach to emotional and mental well-being', focused on understanding progress made in the statutory toolkit and guidance published by Welsh Government. Governors who engaged reported an increased awareness and understanding of the framework and how they can support the schools in their work involving the well-being of the workforce and their learners.

3.2.4 Priority 4: School Improvement

<p>School Improvement</p> <p>Success Measures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Most schools have effective self-evaluation and improvement planning processes, including robust systems for internal/external evaluation and accountability.</i> • <i>All schools identify correct improvement priorities.</i> • <i>All Local Authorities are well informed with regards to the effectiveness of self-evaluation and improvement planning processes in their schools.</i> • <i>Early intervention strategies are deployed where risks are identified.</i> • <i>All schools receive support based on need to enhance their capacity for self-improvement. Support categories reflect the changing needs of schools.</i> • <i>The region, LAs, schools and their stakeholders have a shared understanding of accountability measures within Welsh Government framework for improvement and accountability.</i>
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<p>School Improvement</p> <p>Impact</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Welsh government framework for accountability drives the work of teams across CSC. All CSC staff received training to ensure a clear understanding of the framework which enables them to play their part in supporting and holding the system to account. Updates have also been provided for Headteachers, stakeholders, LAs, elected members and Governor stakeholder groups. Feedback has also been provided to Welsh Government. • IPs have received extensive training through ongoing PL and briefing sessions to enable them to work effectively in supporting schools' self-evaluation processes. • IPs are gathering first-hand evidence working alongside schools in supporting their self-evaluation and monitoring processes. Overall, Improvement Partners have effectively supported schools with their self-evaluation processes. • All schools have agreed SDP priorities based on self-evaluation and monitoring. IPs have worked with schools to support their self-evaluation activities to inform progress towards achieving priorities. Schools across the region have been supported to ensure that there are processes in place to identify priorities and where necessary they have been supported to improve their self-evaluation. This is a continuing priority. • There is evidence that most schools identified appropriate priorities based on their self-evaluation. All schools have been visited to discuss their priorities for improvement, bespoke support identified, and self-evaluation and monitoring processes are under discussion. Priorities have been collated and shared with LAs. Progress towards meeting these priorities is monitored on a termly basis, brokered support was put in place to address school priorities and individual support packages are evaluated on a termly basis to ensure they are effective in enabling the school to make progress. Regular reports are provided to Local Authorities on the quality of teaching, leadership and curriculum. This informs all LA all-school risk meetings and supports the LA to carry out their statutory functions. There is an extensive summary of key information shared with LAs on a termly basis. As a result, appropriate support and intervention in schools has occurred promoting good outcomes for all learners focusing on high quality education and strong leadership. • Where there are significant challenges identified for individual schools, the school receives support and there are enhanced monitoring processes put in place to ensure the support is effective and enabling the school to make progress. Throughout the year 52 schools were receiving enhanced support.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new flowchart is in place for escalating concerns - this can be found in Section 2.11 within the Framework for Improvement. Risk meetings have taken place between all PIPs and CSC's AD and across all LAs. All schools causing concern are discussed at LA Information Meetings as appropriate and where needs have been identified, appropriate follow up actions have taken place. Overall, schools that cause concern have been identified, through effective monitoring, providing appropriate and timely advice to enable the trigger of LA intervention where necessary. • The improvement, accountability and evaluation framework continue to be implemented in all schools across the region. However, ASOS has prevented the framework being fully implemented across the region since the end of February 2023 with a number of schools not engaging fully with Improvement Partners and the normal activities such as supported self-evaluation.
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3.2.5 Priority 5: Effectiveness and efficiency of CSC

<p>Effectiveness & Efficiency of CSC</p> <p>Success Measures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>CSC has processes in place to create and evaluate its Business Plan that meets the needs of all stakeholders.</i> • <i>Communication performance measures show improved engagement against agreed targets.</i> • <i>Streamlined and effective reporting of CSC's services uses a range of quantitative and qualitative information to provide meaningful evidence for evaluation and improvement (accountability, knowledge and development).</i> • <i>Joint Committee ratify CSC's governance recommendations and the progress made against them.</i> • <i>All CSC staff are trained (either synchronous or asynchronously) in Safeguarding and CSC is compliant in line with current legislation.</i>
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<p>Effectiveness & Efficiency of CSC</p> <p>Impact</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welsh Government and Local Authority priorities have been incorporated as actions into the operational plans. 68% of all the priorities have now been fully achieved. Nearly all remaining priorities are underway and will be continuing into next year's business plan. • External and internal communication continues to promote access to professional learning, resources and support for schools and informs staff in their roles. Data analysis has demonstrated increases in social media followers and engagement with posts, as well as sustained high levels of access to website and YouTube content during the period. • CSC suite of reporting developed each with a clear audience and purpose. Revised evaluation roles and responsibilities document shows how data, information and intelligence gathered for these supports their use for accountability, knowledge and development. • All CSC staff are trained in Safeguarding and CSC is compliant in line with current legislation. CSC staff are aware of processes and procedures and are kept up to with regular briefings. • CSC has engaged with an external consultant to review policies and procedures ensuring that matters of diversity are sufficiently and proactively covered. We aim to develop proposals for diversifying our staff and to support with the cultural shift of empowering the organisation to be genuinely anti-racist.
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4.0 PROGRESS WITH RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PUBLISHED REPORTS²

As reports are published, CSC have developed a process for ensuring any recommendations relating to the work of CSC are incorporated into the business planning process. As agreed in the CSC [Monitoring and Reporting Framework](#) at the Joint Committee meeting on the 25th October 2022, progress with recommendations will be reported twice yearly.

In this report we will be providing a progress update with recommendations from the following reports:

Table 3: Published reports with recommendations for CSC

Report title	Author	Published	Report Location
Welsh Immersion Education - Strategies and approaches to support 3 to 11-year-old learners	Estyn	(Feb 2022)	Appendix B
All-age schools in Wales - A report on the challenges and successes of establishing all-age schools	Estyn	(Jan 2022)	Appendix C
Raising Awareness of Children's Rights	WG / UNCRC	(Nov 2021)	Appendix D
Evaluation of Global Futures: a plan to improve and promote international languages in Wales 2020 to 2022 (summary)	WG	(April 2022)	Appendix E

5.0 OVERVIEW OF FUNDING / VALUE FOR MONEY

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.

5.1 Efficient Use of Core Contributions

In 2022-23, 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.

For every £1 of core budget received from LAs, 78 pence is spent on front line delivery.

² As of April 2023

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

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

Summaries of the work provided in the areas listed above to support schools across the CSC region, can be found [here](#).

A summary of the financial outputs for 2022-23 by individual LA can be found in the table below. The Principal Improvement Partner (PIP) figures reflect where actual support is deployed. All other costs are apportioned by IBA:

Table 5: Financial Outputs for 2022-23 by LA

Cost Category	Outturn 2022-23	City & County of Cardiff	Bridgend CBC	Vale of Glam CBC	Merthyr CBC	RCT CBC
		£	£	£	£	£
IBA %	3,625	36.59	15.29	14.83	6.33	26.96
LA Contributions		1,325	554	538	229	977
Principal Improvement Partners	466	133	66	87	59	122
Improvement Partners	1,531	560	234	227	97	413
Other Employees	821	301	126	122	52	221
Premises	113	41	17	17	7	30
Transport	25	9	4	4	2	7
Supplies & Services	594	217	91	88	38	160
Commissioning	28	10	4	4	2	7
Support Services	170	62	26	25	11	46
	3,749	1,334	568	574	266	1,007

% SPEND RECEIVED	35.58	15.14	15.31	7.11	26.87
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*£3,625k of contributions were received from LAs. However, the gross expenditure incurred reached £3,749k. This was net off by £124k of grant funding/school income.

CSC apportioned budget for regional services according to the specific needs of schools. In 2022-23, expenditure (of core budget) in two 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).

5.2 Local Authority Annex

During the financial year 2022/2023, the budget to support specific priorities within individual local authorities is known as the LA Annex. The budget profile for 2022/2023 can be found in the table below.

Table 6: Local Authority Annex Budgets (2022/2023)

Local Authority Annex	IBA	£
Bridgend CBC	15.29%	19,265
Cardiff Council	36.6%	46,116
RCT CBC	29.96%	33,967
Vale of Glamorgan CBC	14.83%	18,686
Merthyr Tydfil CBC	6.33%	7,976
Total	100%	126,010

Principal Improvement Partners work with Directors and school improvement officers in the local authorities to identify the priority areas and evaluate the impact of the initiatives.

5.3 Added Value: Grant Funding

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

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

In 2022-23, the following funding was received:

Table 7: WG Grant Funding

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

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

Cost Category	Outturn 2022-23	City & County of Cardiff	Bridgend CBC	Vale of Glam CBC	Merthyr CBC	RCT CBC
		£	£	£	£	£
		36.59	15.29	14.83	6.33	26.96
Curriculum & assessment	0	0	0	0	0	0
Developing a high-quality education profession	38,301	12,917	4,827	5,914	4,829	9,815

Leadership	172	27	36	39	22	48
Strong and inclusive schools committed to excellence equity & wellbeing	43,174	19,795	5,889	3,350	2,071	12,069
Supporting a self-improving system	5,214	1,784	826	788	344	1,471
Total	86,861	24,524	11,578	10,090	7,266	23,403
% spend received		39.75	13.33	11.62	8.37	26.94

In 2022-23, 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 9: Actual Total Expenditure by LAs 2022-23

Cost Category	Outturn 2022-2023	City & County of Cardiff	Bridgend CBC	Vale of Glam CBC	Merthyr CBC	RCT CBC
		£	£	£	£	£
		36.59	15.29	14.83	6.33	26.96
Gross core expenditure	3,749	1,334	568	574	266	1,007
Delegated grant	87,408	34,715	11,620	10,299	7,282	26,492
	91,157	39.55	13.37	11.93	8.28	26.88

In 2022-23, monetary benefits (in terms of total spend) of regional working were achieved by Cardiff and Merthyr Tydfil.

5.3.1 Bespoke Support

In addition to the above funding, CSC has also developed a process for supporting vulnerable schools which are identified within the financial year. IPs are able to coordinate support for schools that are most in need, examples of support may include a Regional Leader for Governance or a System Leader for a specific number of days, supply cover to release staff for professional learning or funding for a lead practitioner.

The table overleaf shows how this funding was allocated during 2022-23:

Table 10: Bespoke Support Allocations 2022-23

Local Authority	£	% Split	No of Schools Supported
Bridgend CBC	2	1.38%	2
Cardiff Council	19	13.10%	6
RCT CBC	68	49.90%	20
Vale of Glamorgan CBC	33	22.76%	10
Merthyr Tydfil CBC	23	15.86%	6
	145	100%	44

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 information reports. Processes for bespoke support have been further refined and developed within CSC to ensure that a comprehensive summary of the impact of this work is available.

Case Study: Bespoke Support Funding Example

Following inspection, a school was placed in the follow up category of significant improvement. The funding from the bespoke support request (£7,650) related to an Estyn recommendation to improve leadership at all levels. Following the inspection, a substantive Head of Lower School (HoLS) was appointed to develop the distributed leadership in the lower school (Nursery to Year 6).

Funding from the bespoke support request enabled the leadership team of a cluster primary school to provide support to develop the leadership skills of staff across the lower school and improve standards of teaching and learning. The support included:

- development of self-evaluation processes, including an assessment timetable, book looks, lesson dips, listening to learners and learning walks
- creation of an action plan
- support visits
- providing shared INSET and professional learning opportunities
- gathering of evidence and evaluation of impact.

Regular feedback on progress was discussed with the Improvement Partner and Principal Improvement Partner. Feedback and impact of work was also captured during termly progress meetings involving the Improvement Partner, Principal Improvement Partner, SLT, LA officers and governing body representatives.

As a result of this support, the HoLS has developed a suitable understanding of the strategic aspects of the role and through suitable monitoring activities has gained a comprehensive knowledge of the quality of provision across the lower school. AOLE leaders have taken appropriate action following monitoring activities and continue to lead change across the lower school and into the middle school successfully. The HoLS is more evaluative when considering and reporting on impact to fellow professionals.

As a result of the support for practitioners provided by the school-to-school partners, leadership at the school has improved. The confidence demonstrated by leaders has allowed them to implement new processes which has improved the staffing roles and responsibilities and structuring of the school's non-negotiables. Staff now have a better understanding of middle leadership roles and improved skills to support the development of AoLE groups. Leadership within lower school and elements of the SLT have an improved understanding of pedagogy, curriculum development, transition, local and national priorities.

5.3.2 Curriculum Reform and Development

CSC supports schools in all areas of curriculum reform with the aim of realising our National Mission of 'strong and inclusive schools committed to excellence equity and wellbeing'. This includes working with the other regional consortia and partnerships, local authorities, external agencies, and schools to develop national and regional events, programmes, support and guidance for practitioners and school, leaders, including governors.

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

5.4 Collaborative Advantage

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

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

Schools engage with the elements of the model the professional learning that best meets the need of their improvement priorities. This may mean greater and lesser engagement with different aspects of the challenge, or it may mean a more equal engagement in many or all components.

5.5 Additional Examples of Value for Money

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

5.5.1 Equity

CSC provides a universal service to all schools which includes:

- A named Improvement Partner who monitors and reviews the progress of each individual school against their agreed evidence-based improvement criteria.
- All schools will be identified as needing core or enhance support. Enhanced support offers additional monitoring and review for schools that have specific challenges.

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

5.5.2 Economy

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

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

5.5.3 Sustainability

The definition of sustainable is something that can be continued or a practice that can be maintained over time once the resource from CSC (whether financial or leadership) is removed. CSC has developed a sustainable strategy for collaboration in the Central South Wales Challenge (CSWC). An example of this can be seen with the development of the Peer Partnership model. Over time, there has been diminishing financial support and increased leadership of the programme from CSC to schools. By building capacity within the system CSC has been able to provide the structures and processes to enable the strategy to continue without support centrally.

5.5.4 Efficiency

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

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

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

5.5.5 Effectiveness

In section 3.0 above, evidence was provided to support the achievement of outcomes and the impact of the work. During recent LA inspections of LAs, Estyn reported that:

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

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

In addition, during 2022/23 there were 1765 priorities within schools across CSC. By the end of the financial year 1231 priorities were deemed to be on track with 68 not on track. 4 priorities were marked as not yet started, with the remaining priorities being either impacted by “action short of a strike (ASOS)” or not yet evaluated due to new priorities being identified during the academic year. In cases where progress was not on track, this was in nearly all cases as a result of staffing pressures due to Covid, or the long-term absence of a priority lead that reduced schools’ capacity to deliver fully on a priority.

Many of the strategies within the Central South Wales Challenge related to school effectiveness are based upon collaboration and school-to-school working. One of the most frequent research findings across similar collaborative initiatives is that it has led to an increase in leadership capacity, particularly at the middle leadership level. An increase in leadership capacity is a potential proxy for overall gains in pupil achievement.

Leadership roles have been developed in several different strands and at all levels throughout the system and include (although this is not an exhaustive list) SiGs (convenors), Lead Partitioner networks (SMT school members), Peer Partnerships, system leaders etc.

5.5.6 Quality

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

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

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

As a result of regular sharing of practice, approaches and intelligence, the IP & Curriculum/ PL team feel well supported and learn from each other thereby continually improving and refining their practice; these meetings also provide a greater understanding across the team of the strengths of schools and the challenges they face.

6.0 SELF-EVALUATION: NEXT STEPS

Self-evaluation is integral to all aspects of the work of CSC, to ensure business plan priorities are appropriate. Self-evaluation and business planning processes are comprehensive and have been developed and refined over the past few years.

In order to develop a framework for the report, CSC has combined Estyn’s Guidance for Inspectors: [What we Inspect – Local government education services for inspections from 2022](#), as well as the Guidance for the Inspection of Regional Consortia (Jan 2016). The specific themes within each strand of self-evaluation can be found in the table below.

6.1 Focus for 2023/24

As a result of extensive self-evaluation activity, the findings provide an assessment of the performance of CSC during the financial year 2022/23. The areas identified for further development will be incorporated into the operational plans for the priority areas within the CSC business plan in 2023-25

Table 11: CSC Self-Evaluation Strands (2022/2023)

Support for School Improvement	Professional Learning	Leadership & Safeguarding
Themes within self-evaluation strands		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring and reporting schools’ progress Providing bespoke support Intervention in schools causing concern Supporting vulnerable learners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support for school improvement. Support for vulnerable learners. Design of the professional learning offer. Impact of professional learning. Support for Welsh in Education Strategic Plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality and effectiveness of leaders and manager in CSC. CSC Self-evaluation processes and improvement planning. Professional learning in CSC. Safeguarding in CSC. Use of resources in CSC
Areas for Development		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to evaluate and refine reporting arrangements Continued roll-out of the agreed EEE implementation plan Continue to support schools to develop effective cluster working arrangements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyse the volume of PL available for schools and ensure effective communication of the offer. Ensure PL opportunities are available to support all elements of the Enabling Equity and Excellence document. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further develop professional relationships with elected members / officers in local authorities Embed evaluation framework Rationalisation of reporting Evaluating bespoke support processes

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow up aspects arising from quality assurance processes • Widen the profile of CPAG to reduce the impact of poverty across more schools • Further embed Welsh as part of school improvement conversations. • Update school improvement documentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure coherence of PL in curriculum design, teaching, and assessment. • Develop the cluster convenor role to further support the 3 – 16 curriculum. • Redevelop PL and support for Teaching Assistants across the region. • Further development of higher-level Welsh language professional learning (gloywi iaith). • Further develop PL and support for leadership beyond the national pathway programmes. • Develop and implement a tiered approach to Governor PL that builds on knowledge, experiences and skills. • Further develop the regional approach for coaching and mentoring. • Improve participation of delegates in evaluation of PL programmes and events. • Continue to develop evaluation and reporting on the outcomes of PL in school improvement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed risk management processes • Promotion of equality diversity and inclusion. • Staff well-being and healthy cultures. • Embed working practices and QA programme. • Evaluation, outcome and impact of internal professional learning and performance development. • Safer recruitment practices.
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7.0 CONCLUSIONS

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. However, it is recommended that a further review and refinement of reporting processes / procedures and outputs is undertaken to ensure CSC meets the requirements of stakeholders.

Through the improved self-evaluation processes and the increased capacity provided by the research and evaluation board, evidence of impact, value for money and effective practice has been highlighted throughout this report. Self-evaluation 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. To further develop self-evaluation, CSC will analyse the stakeholder survey and address areas of development.

CSC has made strong progress against the priorities within the 2022/2023 business plan, with many elements of the plans achieving very good or strong progress. There were only a few elements that made satisfactory progress with very few elements being removed from the plan (due to changing expectations re grant funding from WG).

Impact of the strategies and activities to achieve the priorities outlined in the 2022-2025 business plan has also been demonstrated. With regards to Curriculum, teaching & assessment, all the success measures have been met, with the exception of those schools using enquiry to support school involvement. Currently, around half of the schools' report that they are using enquiry, lower than the majority (over 60%) as set out in the success measure. Further work will continue towards this target during the remainder of the three-year business plan.

Success measures for Leadership have been met and strong progress has been made towards the success measures in Equity and wellbeing. Over the remainder of the 2022/2025 business plan, the engagement of schools to engage with the principles of Enabling Equity and Excellence will remain a priority.

School improvement priorities will continue to be at the forefront of the work of CSC and schools will continue to be supported to ensure they have effective self-evaluation and improvement planning processes and that all schools have agreed SDP based upon self-evaluation and monitoring. During 2022/23, most schools identified appropriate priorities.

CSC has continued to develop as a learning organisation and many of the areas identified for development being achieved. Communication performance measures continue to improve, and the governance of CSC continues to be robust. Changing expectations on reporting however require an additional review of the current 'suite of reports.'

Strong progress has been made against many of the regional recommendations in published reports, although the impact of this work may be seen over a longer period. Many of the strategies and actions identified to support the recommendations will continue into the operational plans for 2023/24. There is a robust process for embedding recommendations into operational planning and further reports will be

presented on progress / impact against these recommendations in the annual cycle of reporting for 2023/2024.

The benefits of regional working have been illustrated within this report as well as the focus on value for money. CSC uses the resources available efficiently to support the needs of the region and is able to add value to school improvement through the effective use of grant funding and the Central South Wales Challenge. CSC provides a universal offer to all schools and importantly additional bespoke support aligned to the specific needs of both local authorities and schools. The models and strategies for school improvement within CSC are always considered for sustainability and quality.

In 2022-23 there was an increase of 1.7% in core funding from the previous year level. In addition, the region had a decrease in pupil numbers of 853, which subsequently impacted on spend per pupil.

Table 12: Comparison of Core Expenditure per Pupil From 2016-17 to 2022-23

	2016–2017	2017–2018	2018–2019	2019–2020	2020–2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
LA contributions	£4,195,662	£3,985,879	£3,906,161	£3,710,853	£3,599,528	£3,563,532	£3,624,875
Pupil numbers	146,711	147,236	147,697	148,683	149,526	152,141	151,288
Spend per pupil	£28.60	£27.07	£26.45	£24.96	£24.07	£23.42	£23.96

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 95.5% in 2021-22³. Slightly decreasing in 2022-23 to 92.7%. This has been achieved through the continuation of effective deployment of the formerly named Education Improvement Grant (EIG).

During 2022-23, there continued to be some cross-subsidisation across the five LAs. Monetary benefits of regional working were achieved by Cardiff and Merthyr Tydfil but the additional benefits of working regionally can also be seen in the impact on outcomes across the region.

³ In 21/22 a significant amount of one-off grant funding (i.e. CR, Support for Exam Years etc) was allocated to regions from Welsh Government for delegation to schools...this distorts the data set for 21/22.

APPENDIX A: Judgement Matrices

Very Good Progress	The priority action has been addressed in all respects. No aspects require further attention. This has resulted in measurable positive impact to the priority area.
Strong Progress	The priority action has been addressed in most respects. Only minor aspects require attention. It is expected that the work will result in measurable, positive impact to the priority area.
Satisfactory Progress	The priority action has been addressed in many respects. A few important aspects still require significant attention. The impact of the work is not yet strong enough. Many aspects are addressed but there is still significant work to do in important areas.
Limited Progress	The priority action has not been addressed. All or many important aspects are awaiting attention, or the original planned activity is no longer appropriate.
Not Yet Started	The priority action has not been started.

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