Central South Consortium Joint Education Service Joint Committee - 29th September 2016

**Central South Consortium.  JOINT COMMITTEE REPORT SEPTEMBER 2016      AGENDA ITEM 4**

Date: 20<sup>th</sup> September June 2016

**Issue: Update against recommendations by Estyn for Central South Consortium**

**Summary**

1. Estyn and the Welsh Audit Office (WAO) undertook joint fieldwork into the progress and effectiveness of consortia working from October 2014 – January 2015, and both published reports in the summer of 2015.

2. Following the fieldwork, Estyn inspected all four consortia during the 2015/16 academic year.  The Central South Consortium was inspected in March 2016 and was the first to be inspected under a new Consortia inspection framework.

3. Since then, the remaining three consortia have been inspected. Annex B provides a summary of all recommendations across the four consortia.

4. In October, the WAO will publish in October, a progress report against their initial recommendations from the June 2015 report.

5. The Central South report was mostly positive recognising the scale of improvement across schools within the Central South region since the Consortium working began in Wales in 2012. It gave 'good' judgements for leadership, self evaluation and improvement planning and partnerships.

6. Judgements for support for school improvement and resource management remained 'adequate' which in Estyn terms means 'strengths outweigh areas for improvement'.  There were four recommendations for the Consortium to take on board ahead of a likely revisit by Estyn in the autumn of 2017.

7. The Joint Committee asked for an update against the recommendations each time they meet. This report provides this update on progress since the report was published for discussion.

**Recommendation**

8.   Members of the Joint Committee should:

    a.   Note the attached report setting out progress against the inspection report and recommendations (Annex A);

    b.   Note the recommendations for all consortia (Annex B);

    c.   Note that the WAO will publish a follow up report to their intial thematic review in October, for the Public Accounts Committee which reflects progress of all four consortia.

**Background**

9.  Estyn inspected the Consortium in February/March 2016 under their new framework for Consortia published the previous autumn. It was the first of the four consortia to be inspected. All four consortia have since been inspected and had a published reports (outcomes set out in Annex B).

10. The Welsh Audit Office have been conducting further fieldwork to follow their report published in May 2015.  The Auditor General will publish a follow up report in October for the Public Accounts Committee.

11. The other three consortia have since also been subject to inspection. An analysis of all four reports plus recommendations and judgements can be found at Annex B.

12. Since the Central South report was published, school results in the central south region reported in August indicated a fourth successive year of improvement across the region, indicating that the region sits for the first time above the national average at all five key stages with another year or rapid improvement at GCSE and in mathematics in particular.

**Progress against recommendations**

13. There were also a number of areas for improvement in the four recommendations within the report. These were to:

    1.  Ensure that school improvement services address the variability of performance across schools and local authorities, particularly at key stage 4;

    2.  Improve the accuracy of the evaluations of schools by challenge advisers in order to ensure a greater focus on improving teaching and leadership;

    3.  Strengthen the procedures for monitoring and evaluating the impact of school improvement work; and

    4.  Evaluate progress against the regional consortium's operational plans more effectively.

14. In June, the Joint Committee received a report on actions planned against each recommendation with expected impact.

15. Attached at Annex B is a progress report against these planned actions indicating areas of progress and areas which are priorities for this term. These sit within the business plan and are monitored monthly as part of our self evaluation processes. The December report will include impact against actions drawing from self evaluation processes based on validated data.

Attachments:

Annex A: Progress report against recommendations.

Annex B: Analysis of all four consortia inspections.

Hannah Woodhouse

20th September 2016

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**Annex A: Progress against recommendations (lifted from CSC business plan monitoring).**

| Recommendation | What are we planning? | Key actions/ progress to September 2016: Note: evidence/ data concerning impact to date will be presented in the December meeting |
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| R1 Ensure that school improvement services address the variability of performance across schools and local authorities, particularly at key stage 4 | ✓ Improving provision of pupil level data through the establishment of a pupil level database.<br>✓ Collecting schools' self-evaluation reports, improvement plans and targets much earlier in the academic year so that we are able to identify at an early stage whether the targets set will reduce variability of performance between schools and authorities.<br>✓ Enabling challenge advisers to challenge expectations and the targets set where they are not high enough to ensure that:<br>• the variations against key indicators reduce;<br>• we see continuing improvement across the region in all schools.<br>✓ Collecting information about pupils' progress towards targets in secondary and primary schools more readily through the year to help monitor progress.<br>✓ Developing and coordinating a strategy to improve performance in secondary schools across the region both pre- and post sixteen.<br>✓ Establishing an intervention strategy to achieve a consistent approach across the region that will secure improvement at pace in schools causing the greatest concern, including use of the local authority's statutory powers.<br>✓ Strengthening the coordination of joint working with local authorities' inclusion services when supporting schools requiring red or amber support.<br>✓ Continuing work to monitor and improve the | ➢ Procurement process for development of pupil level database agreed but timescale lengthened to spring term 2016 to reflect scale of task.<br>➢ Inclusion data pack now established to provide improved data for the analysis of performance by specific groups.<br>➢ Submission of schools' self-evaluation reports, improvement plans and targets is more prompt than in previous years but still a need to reinforce expectations to ensure full compliance.<br>➢ Full, experienced challenge adviser team in place including SCC advisers working as part of team;<br>➢ Arrangements being made for collection of in-year data about pupils' progress.<br>➢ Draft secondary strategy being developed further in response to feedback with emphasis given to capacity building in partnership with schools with focuses on improving leadership, teaching, management of curricular change, improving pupils' performance and intervention in inverse proportion to success.<br>➢ Secondary performance board established; arrangements being made to discuss strategy and agree with headteachers<br>➢ Intervention strategy agreed and in place to provide framework for schools causing concern, process in place to identify schools which require formal and informal intervention.<br>➢ Inclusion working group now established. Have provided input into development of inclusion data pack. Scope for collaboration in areas of service provision discussed in response to directors' remit. Collaboration also in |

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| | consistency of teacher assessment. <br> ✓ Taking action to raise standards further and improve the quality of teaching and leadership in literacy and English/ Welsh and mathematics. <br> ✓ Increasing the supply of secondary mathematics teachers. <br> ✓ Working with schools to improve the outcomes achieved by eFSM pupils, looked after children, more able pupils, pupils with SEN or EAL and in so doing narrowing the gaps overall on the basis of improvement by all pupils. | responding to allocation of innovation grant by Welsh Government in context of ALN Bill nationally. <br> ➢ Development of national recruitment branding and marketing campaign for core subjects in partnership with other consortia for roll out in early 2017. <br> ➢ Forward planning by assessment lead to provide further professional development for assessment leaders in schools, building on practice and recommendations from 2015-2016. <br><br> **Priorities for this term:** <br> • Complete procurement of provider for development of pupil level database and begin development. <br> • Clarify with Welsh Government requirements concerning future secondary performance measures so that challenge advisers can scrutinise and challenge schools' targets effectively. <br> • Ensure secondary strategy reflects emphasis in the region on building capacity to be self-improving. <br> • Ensure consistency and impact in intervention across secondary schools, particularly where vulnerable groups not making sufficient progress. <br> • Agree key work streams for inclusion working group during 2016-2017. |
| R2 Improve the accuracy of the evaluations of schools by challenge advisers in order to ensure a greater focus on improving teaching and leadership | ✓ Reviewing and developing further the service's protocol, assessment criteria for writing reports and exemplar materials to ensure consistency. <br> ✓ Making the evaluation of teaching and leadership more explicit. <br> ✓ Ensuring this is a focus in the professional development of senior challenge advisers, challenge advisers and the strategic teams. <br> ✓ Linking this with the performance management objectives of staff. <br> ✓ Intensifying action to quality assure written reports. | ➢ Guidance concerning categorisation reports, pre-inspection briefings and inspection follow up progress reports revised and strengthened. <br> ➢ Service's writing protocol revised to provide more specific guidance <br> ➢ Written examples of all types of report provided to promote consistency. <br> ➢ Expectations concerning evaluation of teaching and leadership made explicit and included in examples. <br> ➢ Support and professional development for senior challenge advisers provided through workshop in July |

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| | ✓ Continuing the practice where senior challenge advisers accompany challenge advisers when undertaking work in schools to assure quality and promote consistency. | with former HMI to support quality assurance role.<br>➢ Focus on expectations about writing, including evaluation of teaching and leadership, in programme at start of term for new and existing challenge advisers.<br>➢ Arrangements put in place to quality assure categorisation reports and consistency of outcomes across the region.<br>➢ Arrangements also made to continue practice where line manager accompanies each challenge adviser at one review, challenge and support meeting.<br>➢ Initial planning to link with performance management objectives.<br><br>**Priorities for this term:**<br>• Ensure that guidance, quality assurance and support achieve consistency across the categorisation process, which is earlier than in previous years. |
| R3 Strengthen the procedures for monitoring and evaluating the impact of school improvement work | ✓ Review and revise the Framework for Challenge and Support to strengthen the impact of the monitoring, evaluation and brokerage activity of challenge advisers in order to meet the expectations inherent in recommendation 1 above, namely:<br>• reducing the variations in performance between schools and authorities;<br>• improving the performance of secondary schools;<br>• improving the outcomes of specific groups vulnerable to underachievement.<br>✓ Using the regional analysis of needs that has been completed to guide the work of the hubs, SIGs and the intervention in red and amber support schools.<br>✓ Establishing baseline measures and success criteria at the outset to support evaluation of the impact of the support provided by:<br>• professional learning and curriculum hubs in the | ➢ The challenge framework has been updated to reflect the further changes to national categorisation<br>➢ Challenge advisers will now have access to improved information about the achievement of specific groups to inform their support and challenge.<br>➢ The guidelines for the action to be taken by schools and challenge advisers when there is an unexpected drop in outcomes have been issued and are being used to determine next steps in response to the analysis of outcomes.<br>➢ All programmes offered by hub schools are aligned to the analysis of regional needs and follow an enquiry- led approach.<br>➢ Establishment of research and development board in partnership with Cardiff University and work to develop evidence of the impact of school-based improvement work under way.  Long table exercise conducted with leads in five areas. Learning points for the organisation |

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| | English and Welsh-medium sectors, including the Foundation Phase Alliance;<br>• lead practitioners;<br>• SIGs;<br>• pathfinder partnerships;<br>• the leadership development programmes;<br>• peer enquiry;<br>• programmes to improve the quality of learning and teaching<br>• consultant leaders and consultant governors.<br>✓ Continuing work to assess the progress of red and amber support schools against clear targets and success criteria.<br>✓ Implementing the research and evaluation strategy, supported by researchers from Cardiff University, integrating this with an annual plan for assessing value for money against our key strategies. | being collated in a report. Aspects of the five identified areas to be selected, a baseline established and impact measured.<br>➤ Recruitment of a number of teacher researchers completed as part of the planned capacity with appointment of a project officer planned for the current half term.<br>➤ As part of this work, a survey and sampling techniques being established. A 20% survey of schools has been commissioned to baseline proxy indicators of capacity building in the system.<br>➤ Evaluation of peer enquiry by HMI Ofsted completed. Guidance and expectations for 2016-2017 strengthened. Implementation of phase 3 following training later this month.<br>➤ A provisional view of schools likely to require amber or red support in 2016-2017 has been established and this will be confirmed through the categorisation process. There is likely to be a further reduction of around 25%. Arrangements are being made to broker support and begin the process of monitoring and reporting progress as soon as possible in the term.<br>➤ Service's self-evaluation report and associated process being develop to ensure ownership and the creation of a live document.<br><br>**Priorities for this term**<br>• Carry out a more substantial review of the challenge framework from the spring term 2017.<br>• Deliver baseline indicators and confidence about research and evaluation capacity to capture impact in the system against each school to school strategy. |
| R4 Evaluate progress against the | ✓ Providing internal challenge by continuing to monitor progress against operational action plans | ➤ Monthly monitoring of progress against key actions and expectations for position in each term established. |

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| regional consortium's operational plans more effectively. | monthly.<br>✓ Refining the service's performance dashboard to evaluate noteworthy progress, barriers and risk and action in response.<br>✓ Ensuring that monitoring assesses progress against termly milestones as well as key actions and evaluates the extent to which improvement is occurring as intended.<br>✓ Providing external challenge through the meetings of the advisory board and joint committee.<br>✓ Implementing the service's new system – CRONFA- to improve information management. | ➢ Performance dashboard reconfigured as intended. Now provides better focus on barriers to progress and action to be taken in response.<br>➢ Advisory board provided with information and data to support challenge role.<br>➢ The new information management system has now gone live. Training has been provided both for schools and staff within the consortium<br><br>**Priorities for this term:**<br>• Ensure that monitoring of progress draws not just on evidence about completed actions but also emerging evidence about impact and improvement as set out in termly milestones as part of embedded SER. |

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**Annex B: Estyn Consortia reports. Sept 16**

NB: This is analysis carried out by ERW Directors and does not repeat every aspect of all reports.

Strengths – Black

Areas for Improvement / Issues - Red

| KQ | CSC | GwE | EAS | ERW |
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| 2.1: Support for School Improvement | Adequate<br>• The consortium has a clear vision and strategy to improve schools that is understood by most stakeholders.<br>• Almost all schools across the region are engaging purposefully with **school-to-school** working.<br>• The consortium has recently reviewed the framework to emphasise schools' self-evaluation and improvement planning<br>• In the last two years there has been a reduction in the proportion of schools requiring a higher degree of support. <span style="color:red">However, in a minority of schools, there are still significant concerns.</span><br>• The Challenge and support framework provides useful guidance for challenge advisers nad has been reviewed to focus sharply on improvement priorities<br>• Activities have improved the consistency and clarity of the reports provided to schools and arrangements for collecting data.<br>• <span style="color:red">However, in a few cases, challenge adviser notes of visits to schools do not focus on the most important aspects requiring improvement, such as the quality and consistency of teaching.</span><br>• Meetings to review the progress of schools in the highest categories of support are regular | Adequate<br>• Inspection outcomes also show that schools are, in the main, categorised appropriately.<br>• a high proportion of resource and focus in the consortium was given to improving schools categorised as red and amber. This activity resulted in improvements in many of these schools. <span style="color:red">However, the rate of improvement in other schools slowed and the consortium did not identify shortcomings that resulted in unexpectedly weak outcomes at key stage 4 in 2015. Inconsistencies in target-setting and tracking projected outcomes across the region's secondary schools meant the consortium did not challenge under-performance robustly enough. Although the consortium has since provided further guidance to schools on how targets should be set, the resulting targets agreed by schools, local authorities and the consortium result in regional targets that are much higher than the targets the consortium had previously agreed in its business plan, particularly in relation to the performance of pupils eligible for free school meals.</span><br>• <span style="color:red">However, data is not always used effectively or appropriately</span> | Good<br>• The EAS has a three-year strategy in place for implementing its school-to-school support programme.<br>• (EIBs)Through these boards, the EAS holds school leaders to account for the progress being made more robustly.<br>• local authorities are provided with sufficient information to support their use of statutory powers to intervene in these schools.<br>• The EAS monitors many headline performance indicators across the region carefully and uses this information well to inform priorities in the business plan. As a result, where there has been a specific focus on improving outcomes such as in English and mathematics at GCSE, standards have improved.<br>• <span style="color:red">Challenge advisers and senior leaders do not focus enough on the full range of performance data to ensure that all learners across the region are challenged to make good progress across a range of learning areas.</span><br>• <span style="color:red">However, in a few schools, teacher assessment remains unreliable.</span><br>• The EAS provides a coherent range of training and support materials to raise standards in | Good<br>• In most cases, advisers challenge school leaders robustly about the school's performance, provision and leadership and agree appropriate priorities for support for the year ahead. As a result, ERW categorises schools appropriately. <span style="color:red">In a few cases, challenge advisers are too generous in their judgements about schools and miss important areas for improvement in the school.</span><br>• In most cases, ERW provides local authorities with enough information to support their use of statutory powers of intervention in schools that are causing concern. Schools causing concern often make good progress in the region. <span style="color:red">Although a few secondary schools do not make good progress, the reasons for this are, in part, a matter for the relevant local authorities to address rather than the regional school improvement service.</span><br>• ERW supports local authorities to agree suitable statutory targets for performance at the end of key stages in every school. ERW does not set other targets with all schools. However, other specific targets are often used effectively with schools identified for |

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| | and place an appropriate emphasis on the role of the headteachers and governors to provide evidence of progress.<br>• Where there are concerns about a school's progress, the consortium acts swiftly to alert the local authority and provides timely advice to support the local authority's use of statutory powers to intervene in the school.<br>• The strategy has four main activities; School Improvement Groups (SIGs), 'Pathfinders', 'Hubs' and 'Peer enquiry<br>• However procedures for evaluating its impact are underdeveloped.<br>• Overall, schools rely too heavily on interventions in literacy and numeracy to improve outcomes rather than on the development of teaching and leadership in these areas.<br>• The consortium is developing a comprehensive suite of programmes to improve leadership across the region. | enough in evaluating programmes and projects to support school improvement.<br>• However, challenge advisers' evaluations in a few schools are too generous or too vague and do not evaluate leadership well enough.<br>• self-improving system' where leaders of education provide 'mutual support and challenge to raise standards in all schools'. Headteachers are very positive about this cultural change and exemplify early benefits anecdotally. There are examples of robust, helpful challenge between headteachers engaged in the first year of this programme. However, evaluations in peer review reports tend to rely too heavily on data without checking this against first-hand evidence such as lesson observations or scrutiny of learners' work. Challenge advisers join discussions between headteachers but do not always carry out their quality assurance role rigorously enough.<br>• The consortium has been slow to provide clear and consistent challenge and support for schools on reducing the impact of deprivation on outcomes.<br>• The consortium has developed a comprehensive and coherent range of programmes to develop leadership in the region<br>• local authorities have sufficient intelligence to support the use of their statutory powers of intervention in schools causing concern. | English and literacy. Schools receive details of the support available through the professional learning offer. In addition, the EAS has supported local authorities to address particular priorities, for example in working to improve pupils' standards in writing in Blaenau Gwent, or pupils' reading in Torfaen.<br>• However, success criteria for aspects of the service offer are not always clear or measurable enough to enable the EAS to evaluate the impact of actions.<br>• However, although the performance of pupils eligible for free school meals has improved slowly across the region at key stage 4, it varies notably across the five local authorities.<br>• This enables headteachers from successful, often high achieving, schools to work together as a small group and visit each other's schools.<br>• The EAS provides strong support for school governors. | intensive support.<br>• most reports that ERW provides to Estyn prior to school inspections or monitoring visits show a sound understanding of a school's strengths and areas for improvement.<br>• The consortium now has strong quality assurance processes in place for the work of its challenge advisers and other school improvement staff.<br>• In most schools, ERW successfully provides or brokers suitable support to address areas for improvement.<br>• ERW uses its knowledge of good practice well to broker a significant amount of school-to-school support, which usually works successfully.<br>• use of the Pupil Deprivation Grant. However, ERW's evaluation of the impact of funding on learners' standards is limited.<br>• ERW has good systems for recording information about their work with, and evaluations of, schools.<br>• |
| 3.1 Leadership | Good<br>• Senior leader in authorities and in | Adequate<br>• underpinned by a vision of a | Good<br>• The membership of the board has | • established a strong identity for ERW. |

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| | the senior management team have a clear shared strategic vision of the service and there is appropriate governance in place.<br>• The consortium has a clear and well-articulated vision for their self-improving schools model.<br>• However, not all school governors and elected members understand well enough the role of the consortium in raising pupils' standards and the outcomes it has achieved so far.<br>• The joint committee and advisory board provide clear direction to the consortium's managing director and senior management team.<br>• The five local authority chief executives have also recently commissioned a useful scoping exercise to identify other education services where joint working may bring added value.<br>• The consortium has worked effectively with each scrutiny committee to provide data, training in order to help the committee hold schools and officers to account for performance.<br>• However, scrutiny chairs remain unclear about which aspects of the consortium's work they can and cannot scrutinise more directly. | self-improving system that is generally well understood by the majority of stakeholders.<br>• However, the strategic overview and accountability of joint working within a range of partnerships is not fully developed.<br>• The management board provides appropriate challenge to the consortium's officers in most areas, although they do not sufficiently challenge the quality of the consortium's self-evaluation processes and reports.<br>• There is a better balance between challenge and support to schools and there are indications that the approach is having a positive impact on improving outcomes in schools categorised as red and amber.<br>• However, the arrangements between the scrutiny committees and GwE officers are not always planned sufficiently in advance and this brings unnecessary pressure on officers to respond at short notice. | stabilised, and the board is now realising the benefits of operating as a company. In particular, this approach to providing a regional service is enabling the board to make decisions quickly and take swift action to address issues.<br>• The board holds the interim managing director to account increasingly effectively, although formal performance management arrangements for this role are not currently in place.<br>• EAS has tailored its work well to support the context of each local authority. Targets for improvement in the plan do not take enough account of wide range of performance indicators in order to fully measure progress in areas for improvement, such as the performance of vulnerable learners and more able learners.<br>• Leaders in the EAS and the local authorities have developed trusting relationships that allow for effective mutual challenge of each other's work. This means that barriers to the successful delivery of the business plan are addressed quickly.<br>• she has streamlined communication with schools and brought additional clarity and rigour to several aspects of the daily work of staff. | • As a consequence of this joint working, there has been improved support and challenge to schools within the region, with more consistent collection and analysis of data and better evaluation of provision and leadership in schools.<br>• However, the agendas, minutes and reports for many of these groups do not provide a clear enough record of what has been discussed, the actions agreed, progress made, or the implications of these to the work of ERW.This means that decisions taken, important changes, progress against expected milestones, and interim outcomes are not recorded well enough, which makes it difficult to monitor and audit what is going on effectively. Despite occasional lapses, communication between ERW's senior leaders and local authority senior leaders is usually good enough to sustain effective working relationships between all leaders.<br>• Each local authority's education department has its own strategic planning documents .. and there are many links with ERW's Regional Strategy and Business Plan. In most local authority education improvement plans, the contribution of ERW is clearly laid out. However, in a few plans this is less clear, which makes it more difficult to track how the contribution of ERW will be targeted and to evaluate the potential impact of specific pieces of work in these local authorities.<br>• ERW takes appropriate account of |

| | | | | local and national priorities in its strategic planning and workstreams, such as improving literacy and numeracy, improving pupil attendance, closing the gender performance gap. <span style="color:red">However, the quality of individual strategy documents varies too widely.</span><br>• ERW generally supports elected members well in carrying out their scrutiny functions. <span style="color:red">Local authority portfolio holders do not have a clear enough input to the management or oversight of the work of ERW despite their key responsibility in their local authority for the oversight of education services.</span> |
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| 3.2: Improving Quality | **Good**<br>• Over the last two years the consortium has developed into a reflective organisation that is committed to evaluating and improving its own practice and performance.<br>• Senior leaders take good account of a wider range of stakeholders and adjust plans when necessary to meet needs. This is enabling leaders to secure increasingly accurate self evaluation arrangements and improvements to the business planning process.<br>• These plans focus on important areas for improvement and include time scales and costings.<br>• <span style="color:red">The consortium is strengthening its performance management arrangements for individual members of staff. However, in 2014/15 agreed objectives and identified success criteria were not always precise enough to enable senior leaders to judge</span> | **Adequate**<br>• They regularly consult with schools and other partners to gauge opinions, on the overall quality of the school improvement service.<br>• <span style="color:red">However, senior leaders do not always use data at pupil level effectively enough to inform their judgements about strengths and areas for improvement in all performance outcomes, for example in analysing the outcomes of groups of pupils, including vulnerable pupils, at a regional level.</span><br>• <span style="color:red">However, the few evaluations that have been conducted rely too heavily on a narrow breadth of evidence, tend to focus on process rather than outcomes and are generally too descriptive. This hinders senior leaders' abilities to reflect on the overall effectiveness of the initiatives.</span><br>• <span style="color:red">However, the self-evaluation</span> | • Service area leaders review progress half-yearly. The best examples of reviews are analytical and identify clearly the impact of actions in schools. <span style="color:red">A few evaluations are not sharp or specific enough.</span> However, the senior management team offers appropriate challenge to team leaders and supports them well to improve their analyses.<br>• To provide a more frequent check on progress, self-evaluation is enhanced by the use of the 'FADE' approach, in which the capital letters stand for focus, analyse, do, evaluate.<br>• <span style="color:red">However, in a few areas, targets for improvement do not focus well enough on important areas for improvement, such as raising achievement in the capped points score. This means that it is difficult for leaders to monitor progress in these areas.</span><br>• The Joint Executive Group (JEG) | **Adequate**<br>• ERW has sound arrangements for evaluating the effectiveness of its school improvement services.<br>• There are strong procedures for gathering evidence about the quality and impact of support that is provided to schools.<br>• <span style="color:red">However, evaluations lack sufficient detail about the performance of groups of pupils, including vulnerable pupils, at a regional level.</span><br>• The key regional priorities are grouped into three relevant strategic areas: leading learning; teaching and learning; and support for learning.<br>• <span style="color:red">However, the business plan and related documentation do not set out clearly enough how the impact of ERW's work is to be evaluated and how progress against ERW's priorities will be tracked and measured. This limits ERW's capacity to capture,</span> |

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| | accurately the quality of the work of their teams, 2015/16 shows improvement. | report is generally too descriptive and lacks sufficiently robust evaluation of the effectiveness of the consortium's work.<br>• the priorities focus well on supporting schools to become self-improving and on ensuring that the consortium is consistent in its support and challenge of schools in the region. However, many of the priorities, their associated milestones, and the delivery actions within the workstreams lack measurable targets or clear success criteria. This makes it difficult for senior leaders to measure progress within the region accurately enough.<br>• However, these risks are not considered or evaluated systematically by the Joint Committee or other groups to which they are assigned. As a result, the consortium lacks appropriate ownership of the risks in order to work effectively to mitigate their possible effect. | and the company board scrutinise the delivery of the business plan with increasing effectiveness and an appropriate level of challenge. Reports to the JEG and the company board now identify risks and make suitable reference to the risk register. However, the formal identification and management of risk in the company are at an early stage of development.<br>• The service has also used external surveys effectively to improve its quality improvement procedures. | process, analyse, and report on the information needed to review how effectively it is improving aspects of its service.<br>• ERW has suitable performance management arrangements for its central team of staff. They all have relevant performance management objectives. However, in a few instances these objectives are not linked clearly enough to the ERW business plan. This makes it difficult for senior leaders to monitor individuals' contributions to the overarching goals. |
| 3.3 Partnerships | Good<br>• The consortium has successful developed strong relationships with a range of partners.<br>• The consortium has started to involve experienced governors in school-to-school support through the appointment of consultant governors.<br>• The consortium has appropriately recognised the need to develop closer working between challenge advisers and inclusion staff to share information about vulnerable groups of pupils. | Adequate<br>• However, the strategic role of the regional networks and their accountability to the Joint Committee is not clear and the future direction of aspects of their work within the National Model has not been fully identified.<br>• the work undertaken by the Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Inclusion Network, systems and processes are more consistent across the region. For example, there is a cohesive approach to co-ordinating services | Good<br>• There are good arrangements for sharing information between the local authorities and the EAS. For example, the useful monthly meetings of local authority and the EAS officers to discuss and share information about specific issues in schools enable appropriate and timely support to be provided to schools.<br>• The EAS works well with the local authorities to support pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) and to promote social inclusion and wellbeing.<br>• The collaborative working and the | Good<br>• Headteachers and local authority officers contribute well in influencing the strategic direction and priorities of ERW.<br>• Governors generally have a good understanding of data at governor level due to the training provided by ERW. They are however less clear about the differences between the support provided by ERW and that provided by local authorities.<br>• However, the role that the diocesan authorities have in shaping regional policy is less well developed. |

| | | | recent joint planning of the resource have led to economies of scale in the delivery of training across the region and the establishment of common policies and working practices.<br>• | |
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| 3.4 Resource management | Adequate<br>• The consortium has sound financial management processes in place which allow for budgets to be set robustly and monitored carefully. Costs are kept under regular and tight review.<br>• The consortium is making good use of data to allocate resources against key priorities.<br>• This has enabled the consortium to reduce the local authority core funding by 5% for 2016-2017 and a further 5% for 2017-2018 without impacting on core services. Plans are in place to review other areas for collaboration across the region, such as governor support, further to reduce costs and improve the effectiveness of the services. | Unsatisfactory<br>• However, GwE has not fully developed its financial analysis to support the delivery of its three-year business plan. GwE has yet to develop a medium-term financial plan or workforce plan aligned to its business plan.<br>• However around 11 per cent of GwE's core funding is retained by the local authorities to deliver governor advice and support, regional ICT, and specialist HR support through regional networks. The delivery of the Foundation Phase, 14-19 learning pathways and Welsh in Education strategic plans and Welsh in Education grant are still delivered by the local authorities and are funded by the non-delegated element of the Education Improvement Grant.<br>• GwE recognises that there is further work required to align grant allocations with its priorities, although progress to date has been limited.<br>• GwE does not currently systematically collate the information gathered on schools' use of grant funding and therefore opportunities to share effective practice and wider learning are not fully exploited.<br>• There is not a consistent view across all stakeholders of how the value for money of GwE's | Good<br>• There are recent, clear arrangements in place to demonstrate how resources are allocated to priorities and to identify the resources used for each element of the business plan and its detailed appendices.<br>• the EAS and local authorities have agreed to a reduction of 3% in core funding for 2016-2017 alongside a reduction in grant income.<br>• Whilst lacking a written workforce strategy, the EAS has a reasonable understanding of future workforce needs and this has informed the business plan and the draft medium-term financial plan.<br>• A recent value for money report to the Joint Executive Group … considers appropriately the resources applied to the work of challenge advisers, school-to-school developments and training at local authority level, and notes the categorisation of each school at local authority level. This type of analysis enables the resources used and value for money to be considered in the light of future changes to categorisation of schools overall and for each local authority.<br>• | Good<br>• School improvement funding is largely retained within the six local authorities and resources are allocated within the region according to need, which is based primarily on the categorisation process.<br>• As outlined in ERW's legal agreement, each of the six local authorities provides an in-kind shared service for the region, for example procurement or monitoring officer. However, as the cost of these services to each local authority varies, the burden is shared unequally across the six authorities. A further accepted part of the regional approach is that local authority officers contribute to regional working by providing a wide range of activities on an in-kind basis. However, the region does not seek to quantify the full financial value of this support.<br>• The region's strong emphasis on working collaboratively has led to the effective provision of guidance documents, templates and policy support, which are reducing duplication and increasing consistency of approach across the authorities.<br>• Within ERW's business plan there is limited information on the level of resources for the business plan areas relating to the central team, |

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| | | activities can be measured, with a considerable emphasis being placed on key stage 4 level 2+ results over other business plan objectives.<br>• GwE's annual review for 2014-2015 did not clearly link the cost of services with the outcomes it achieved. For example the annual review identifies that effective use was made of its commissioning budget. However, the criteria by which that judgement was made are not clearly stated and no report was provided to the Joint Committee nor the Management Board on the use of this budget.<br>• GwE and the consortium recognise the need to evolve an approach to measuring its value for money and to develop processes to demonstrate that its use of resources will have the maximum impact on pupil outcomes. The deficit in critically evaluating the outcomes achieved against the costs of delivery means that GwE is not currently well placed to assess how best to use its resources in order to achieve the aims and priorities in its business plan. | | although the plan does identify whether core funding or grant funding is to be used.<br>• There is a clear principle in place that funding is used to deliver school improvement and increase the capacity of schools whilst retaining a lean central team.<br>• Whilst lacking a written workforce strategy, ERW has a good understanding of the future workforce needs across the region and this has informed the recent development of a number of partnerships to address these issues, although it is too soon to assess the impact. ERW uses secondments well to provide development opportunities for school leaders and build capacity for self-improvement<br>• ERW has further developed its framework to consider value for money, which includes a series of seven principles that seek to inform an overall judgement. It considers the impact of its services on pupil outcomes, noting the overall performance of headline indicators at key stage 4, including the performance of pupils eligible for free school meals. However, this approach is not fully developed and it does not consider the totality of resources used to influence outcomes, including the in-kind contributions from each local authority.<br>• ERW plans to conduct a formal value for money review later in 2016 for consideration by the Joint Committee |
| Recommendations | Recommendations | Recommendations | Recommendations | Recommendations |

| | R1 Ensure that school improvement services address the variability of performance across schools and local authorities, particularly at key stage 4<br>R2 Improve the accuracy of the evaluations of schools by challenge advisers in order to ensure a greater focus on improving teaching and leadership<br>R3 Strengthen the procedures for monitoring and evaluating the impact of school improvement work<br>R4 Evaluate progress against the regional consortium's operational plans more effectively | R1 Ensure that the school improvement service uses data, target setting and tracking procedures more effectively to challenge and support schools in order to improve performance of all learners across schools and local authorities, particularly at key stage 4.<br>R2 Improve the quality of evaluation in the delivery of school improvement services.<br>R3 Improve the rigour of the arrangements for identifying and managing risk.<br>R4 Ensure that business and operational plans contain clear success criteria and that progress against these are monitored effectively.<br>R5 Clarify the strategic role of the regional networks and their accountability to the Joint Committee.<br>R6 Develop an appropriate framework to assess value for money; ensure that the business plan is accompanied by a medium-term financial plan and that work-streams are fully costed. | R1 Consider the use of a wider range of performance indicators at school and regional level to ensure that the progress of all groups of learners is challenged and supported<br>R2 Improve consistency in the quality of evaluation of school improvement activities throughout the service<br>R3 Identify and manage risks more effectively | R1 Ensure that school improvement services address the performance of schools causing concern, particularly in the secondary sector<br>R2 Ensure that planning for education improvement clearly integrates local and regional priorities, so that ERW and local authority plans are complementary and contain actions that are specific and measurable, with appropriate milestones for delivery<br>R3 Ensure that the work of the main boards and working groups is recorded carefully and consistently, so that concerns, decisions and actions are clear, auditable and fully costed, and that they enable leaders to monitor progress<br>R4 Refine the framework for assessing value for money so that all relevant costs across the six authorities are taken into account fully when set against outcomes |