Central South Consortium

Self-evaluation

September 2014

Key Question 1: Standards

1.1 Standards – results and trends in performance	
Evaluation	**Evidence**
The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) for the region was 22.5% in 2013-2014 compared with 20.5% nationally. The proportion eligible for FSM in each of the authorities in both primary and secondary schools is more than the national average in all authorities except the Vale. In each local authority the relative ranking in terms of FSM against other local authorities is as follows – primary then secondary: Bridgend (15/14); Cardiff (17/17); Merthyr (19/21); RCT (21/19; the Vale (5/6). Taking performance against the foundation phase indicator (FPOI) performance is ahead of the FSM ranking in Bridgend, the Vale, the same in RCT and below in Cardiff and Merthyr. Using the core subject indicator (CSI) performance is ahead of the FSM ranking for all five authorities at key stage 2. This is also the position at key stage 3 except for Bridgend and the Vale. (Awaiting data at key stage 4). In 2013-2014, there were improvements in each local authority and for the consortium as a whole in the Foundation Phase and at each key stage. In each case, the increases were greater for schools' more able pupils as performance at the outcome/ level above the expected outcome/ level improved more than at the expected outcome/ level. Taking the last three years as whole, the rate of improvement has been similar to that for Wales in the Foundation Phase and so the gap with the Welsh averages has not changed much (around 1% below). In contrast, at key stage 2 and key stage 3 rates of improvement have been between 1% and 2% greater than for Wales at level 4/ 5 and level 5/6+. The gap with the Welsh averages at key stages 2 (level 4) and 3 (level 5) has narrowed to within about 0.5%. At level 5(key stage 2) and level 6+ (key stage 3) performance is generally in line with or above the Welsh averages except in English and science at key stage 2 and maths at key stage 3. At key stage 4 provisional data for 2013-2014 indicate improvement against all the main indicators for the region and in each local authority. There has been improvement for each of the last three years but this was at a much more substantial rate in 2013-2014 than in the previous two years. Early indications suggest that the rate of improvement in the Central South Wales region was greater than in each of the other three consortium areas. There is a significant reduction in the number of schools where less than 40% and less than 50% of pupils achieve the level 2+ threshold. However, there are still too many schools where this is the case and where there is a wide gap in the proportion of pupils reaching the level 2+ threshold compared with the level 2 threshold. These improvements notwithstanding there is much to do to improve outcomes at each key stage. In some cases the improvements in performance have started from a low base and, even though the gaps with the Welsh averages have reduced considerably, there is a need to improve performance further so that the region's pupils can compete	View of performance in 2012-2013 Initial view of performance in 2013-2014 Annual reports on performance to scrutiny in Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr, RCT and the Vale. National reading and numeracy test results 2013 and 2014 WG statistical release - end of foundation phase outcomes and National Curriculum teacher assessment of core subjects at key stages 2 and core and non-core subjects at key stage 3. Data tables at the FP and each key stage, KS4 spreadsheet Aggregated target summary spreadsheet Benchmarking data

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successfully with their peers across Wales, the UK and beyond.

Performance at A level is generally lower than in the previous year against the higher grades and there are variations between the local authorities. The reductions were similar to those nationally.

In the Foundation Phase and at each key stage the proportion of schools in the top 2 benchmarking quartiles for the main indicators has increased compared with the position in 2012. However, there are still too many schools in the lowest quarter overall.

Foundation Phase

At Outcome 5+ improvement in the region against the FPOI (2%) was in line with the improvement for Wales. There were improvements in each area of learning of between 1% and 2% - figures similar to Wales except for Welsh which did not compare so well (4.3% against - 13.1% -but remains above the Welsh average).

In each local authority **at outcome 5+ i**mprovement was most prominent in Bridgend, Merthyr and Cardiff (around 3%)**.** Performance is above the Welsh average only in the Vale (around 4%)**.**

At Outcome 6 the improvement was similar to Wales also but greater than at outcome 5 (between 2% and 6%). Overall performance against each indicator was 1% to 3% below the Welsh average a gap similar to that of previous year. Performance is highest in PSD and lowest in LLC-E – a feature that is replicated across the five local authorities. There was a significant improvement in Welsh in most authorities

Taking the last three years as whole, the rate of improvement has been greatest against the FPOI at outcome 5+ in Merthyr (7.2%) and least in Bridgend (3.3%). The rate of improvement is better than that for Wales (4.7%) in the Vale, Cardiff and Merthyr, similar in RCT and less than Wales in Bridgend.

Performance was above the aggregated **targets** for each school at outcome 5+ for 2013-2014 in Welsh and PSD, in line in the FPOI, LLC-E and mathematical development. Overall, performance is on track to meet the targets set for 2015. For each local authority outcomes were above aggregated targets by around 1% in the Vale, 2% in Bridgend, in line or above by 1% in Cardiff, above by 3%-4% in Merthyr and 1%-3% in RCT.

At outcome 6 performance was generally above **targets** by about 2% (6% in PSD). This improvement was also reflected in the performance at local authority level.

Key stage 2

At Level 4+ improvements were more substantial than for Wales against the CSI (2.5%/ 0.8%). The improvements in each core subject were all about 0.5% above the improvement for Wales. (1.1% in Welsh). Results were all between 88%-90% - with Welsh highest and English lowest as for the Foundation Phase.

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Rates of improvement were similar across the five local authorities against the CSI (between 1.7% and 3%). Performance in the Vale is above that of Wales, in Bridgend it is in line, close in Cardiff close, and just under in RCT and Merthyr.

Nine out of every ten pupils made progress of two National Curriculum levels or more at key stage 2 in 2013-2014 in English, mathematics and science and nearly nine in every ten in Welsh first language – figures that are in line with those nationally. The proportion of pupils making three levels of progress was similar to those nationally in English (29%) and just below in maths (24%) and science (22%).

Against the CSI at key stage 2 in 2013 actual results were in line with estimates in the main at level 4+ but below by between 2%-4% at level 5. Value-added data was generally stronger for girls than for boys.

At Level 5 improvements in the region were greater than at level 4 (by between 1% and 3%). The percentage at level 5 in each subject is similar (between 37% and 38%).

Across the local authorities improvements were most prominent in Welsh except Bridgend (fell by 6.4%)**.** The smallest improvement was in mathematics (between 1.4% and 3%). Performance was above that of the Wales average in the Vale, close in Bridgend and Cardiff, below by between 4% and 6% in RCT and Merthyr

Taking the last three years as whole, the rate of improvement has been greatest against the CSI in Merthyr (6.9%) and least in Cardiff (4.4%). The rate of improvement is better than that for Wales (3.5%) in all five authorities.

Performance was about 1% above the schools' aggregated **targets** against the key indicators at key stage 2 at level 4+– a further approximately 3% improvement will be required to meet the more challenging targets set for 2015. The performance was around 0.5% above targets in Bridgend, Cardiff and the Vale, between 2% and 4% in Merthyr and 2% in RCT.

At level 5 outcomes were nearly 3% higher than **targets** in the core subjects and a further 3%-5% improvement will be needed in most case to reach the targets for 2015. This pattern was also reflected in most of the local authorities.

Key stage 3

At Level 5+ there was a 4.1% improvement against the CSI – similar to that for Wales. For each core subject the improvements were all between 0.1% and 0.5%   above the rate of improvement for Wales (1.4% in Welsh). Results were all between 85%-90% with Welsh highest and English lowest.

There were improvements in all five authorities except in Welsh in the Vale. The greatest percentage improvement was in Merthyr and lowest in Vale (but there was a significant improvement in the Vale in the previous year). The Vale and Cardiff are above national averages, Bridgend is close, RCT is below by around 2% and Merthyr by between 3% and 5%.

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The proportion of pupils making two or more levels of progress in the core subjects is improving. Just over half of pupils made two or more levels of progress at key stage 3 in 2013-2014 in maths and science and just under half in English and Welsh.

At Level 6 improvements in the region were around twice those at level 5 except in maths. They were similar to Wales in maths and ahead in English, Welsh, science. Performance is highest in science (57.1%) and lowest in English (49%).

There were improvements in each local authority most prominently in RCT. The greatest improvement was in Welsh and the least in maths. Performance is above the Wales average in the Vale and Cardiff, in Bridgend it is above in Welsh and science, below in English and maths. Outcomes are similar in RCT in English, Welsh, science and below in maths. Outcomes are generally below in Merthyr.

Against the CSI at key stage 3 outcomes were in line with or just above estimates except in Bridgend where they were about 2% below in 2013. Girls' performance was generally a little further ahead of estimates than was the case for boys at both level 5+ and level 6+.

Taking the last three years as whole, the rate of improvement has been greatest against the CSI in the Vale (11.6%) and least in Cardiff (7.3%). The rate of improvement is better than that for Wales (8.5%) in all local authorities except Cardiff.

Performance was 1%-2% above the schools' aggregated t**argets** for 2013-2014 at level 5 in the key indicators. This performance is about 3% short of the targets for the region for 2015. The results were between 0.5% and 1% above targets in Bridgend, 0.5%-2% above in Cardiff, between 0% and 2% above targets in the Vale, just below targets n Merthyr (between 1% and 3%), and 2% -3% above in RCT.

At level 6+ performance was well above **targets** (between 4% and 9% - science). There were also improvements in each local authority – most were significant but the extent of the improvement varied more between authorities.

Performance in the non-core subjects has improved at a faster rate than for Wales over the last three years and has narrowed the gap with the Wales averages in all cases. Performance is above the Welsh average in Art, close in line in history, IT, Welsh second language, music and around 1% below in geography, design technology, modern languages, music and physical education.

Key stage 4
Provisional data indicate that the region has recorded the biggest improvement to date in the percentage achieving the L2+ from the previous year (4.6%). This has meant a significant reduction in the number of schools where less than 40% and less than 50% of pupils achieve the level 2+ threshold. (6 schools below 30% -7 in 2013; 6 below 40% - 15 in 2013; 21 schools below 50% -34 in 2013).

There have been gains against the level 1 threshold and further significant gains at level 2 and in the CSI.

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Nevertheless, there are 22 schools where the gap between the level 2+ and the level 2 threshold is more than 30% (27 in 2013) and 54 where it is more than 10% (55 in 2013).

The gains at regional level are also reflected in the performance of each local authority although there are variations in the rate of improvement against particular indicators. The most substantial gains were in science and against the level 2 threshold followed by the level 2+ threshold and the CSI. Against the level 2+ threshold the greatest gains were made in Merthyr and the Vale at the least in Bridgend. There were gains also at level 1 and in relation to the proportion of pupils achieving 5 grades A*/A. However, there are wider variations against these two indicators across the local authorities and the proportion of pupils reaching the highest grades is too low in some parts of the region and overall.

In most core subjects performance at regional level made sharp gains in contrast to the position in the previous year with the exception of performance in Welsh which fell in all but two schools in the region. This was also the case in each local authority.

There has been sustained improvement now **over a three-year period**, although the pace necessary to meet the region's challenging targets is evidenced only in the most recent year's figures.

The greatest improvement has been recorded against the level 2 threshold followed by the level 2+ threshold and outcomes in mathematics and science. Against the key indicator, the level 2+ threshold, the greatest improvement has been recorded in Merthyr (16.5%) followed by the Vale (6.7%), then RCT (6.6%), Cardiff (4.7%) and Bridgend (4.3%). Against this indicator performance is highest now in the Vale, followed by Bridgend, then Cardiff, then RCT and then Merthyr.

Against the level 1 threshold performance is highest in Merthyr followed by Cardiff and RCT, then the Vale and then Bridgend. The improvements over the last three years are greatest in Merthyr (7.6%), then RCT (3.6%), Cardiff (1.8%), Bridgend (0.6%) and the Vale (0.3%).

Value added data indicated in 2013 that against the level 2+ threshold at key stage 4 actual performance was broadly in line with estimates in Bridgend and RCT and between 2% and 3% below in Cardiff, Merthyr and the Vale in 2013. Boys' and girls' actual scores also reflected this pattern but the gap between estimates and actual outcomes was wider for girls than for boys in most instances. (awaiting 2014 data).

Performance for the region at the level 2+ threshold was below the t**arget** aggregated from schools' targets by 3% in 2013-2014 and is 6% adrift of the target for 2015. Performance was 4% below the targets in Bridgend and Cardiff, 3% in the Vale and RCT and was in line in Merthyr.

Against the level 1 threshold performance was 0.9% below the **targets** for the region from schools' aggregated targets. Performance was 3.5% below targets in Bridgend and the Vale, 2% below in Cardiff, just over 1% below in Merthyr and in line in RCT.

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Benchmarking data

In the Foundation Phase and at each key stage the proportion of schools in the top 2 benchmarking quartiles for the main indicators has increased compared with the position in 2012. At key stages 2 and 3, and against the level 2 + threshold at key stage 4, just over half of schools are in the top 2 quartiles. This improvement notwithstanding, there are still too many schools in the lowest quarter – one fifth in the Foundation Phase and key stage 2 and a quarter at key stages 3 and 4 – and not yet enough in the top quarter – one fifth in the Foundation Phase and key stages 2 and 3 and one third at key stage 4.

In the Foundation Phase the highest proportion in the first quarter is in the Vale (25%) and the lowest in Bridgend (10%). The highest proportion in the fourth quarter is in RCT (27%) and the least in the Vale (17%).

At key stage 2 25% of schools in the Vale are in quarter 1 but only 13% in Bridgend and Cardiff. One fifth of schools are in quarter 4 in RCT and Merthyr. Cardiff has the lowest proportion in quarter 4 (16%).

At key stage 3 the highest percentage of schools in quarter 1 is in RCT (27%): there are no schools in the top quarter in Bridgend and Merthyr. One third of Cardiff's schools are in quarter 4.

At key stage 4 two fifths of Bridgend's schools are in quarter 1 but only a quarter in Cardiff and Merthyr. Around 25% of secondary schools in each of the local authorities are in quarter 4.

Post 16 – A Level Results of pupils aged 17

Performance at A level is generally lower than in the previous year against the higher grades. The reductions were similar to those nationally. Performance is stronger in Bridgend, Cardiff and the Vale than in RCT and Merthyr. The proportion achieving the level 3 threshold was 96.4% compared with 96.5% in 2013. More boys than girls achieved this threshold (around 5% higher).

The proportion of subject entries at A*/A for the region was 1.8% lower than that of the previous year (24.3%/ 26.1%) It was above this figure in Bridgend (27.6%) Cardiff (27.4%) and the Vale (27.9%) and below in RCT (15%) and Merthyr (15.2%).

The proportion of subject entries at A*-C was 1% lower than that of 2013 (74.8%/ 75.8%). Outcomes were above this in Bridgend (77.7%, Cardiff (76.9%) and the Vale (76.3%) and below in RCT (68.9%) and Merthyr (67.2%).

The proportion of subject entries at A*-E was 0.3% higher than that of the previous year (97.6%/ 97.3%). It was above this figure in Bridgend (99.0%), Cardiff (97.7Vale (98.0%) and below in RCT (96.2%) and Merthyr (94.1%).

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1.2 Standards – standards of groups of learners, vulnerable and disadvantaged groups including young people who are NEET	
Evaluation	Evidence
Gender With few exceptions in 2013-2014 and over the last three years, girls outperform boys against most indicators. The gap in outcomes is widest in English and Welsh and narrowest in mathematics. These features are evident in the Foundation Phase and persist at each key stage and in performance at A level. More able girls also generally outperform more able boys by a wider margin at the outcome/ level above the expected outcome/ level with the exception of performance in mathematics at key stage 2 at level 5. Within each local authority the gaps in performance between boys and girls are also evident and reflect most of the patterns for the region as a whole. Boys' performance is sometimes closer to, or ahead of that of girls, against a few indicators at key stage 2 at level 5 especially in mathematics. **Pupils eligible for free school meals and those not eligible** The gaps in performance have narrowed over the last three years in the Foundation Phase and at key stages 2 and 3 against the CSI. However, at key stage 4 the gap has not narrowed against the level 2+ threshold. Overall, the gaps remain too wide especially in secondary schools. Since 2012 the gap in achievement between e-FSM pupils and those who are not e-FSM has narrowed from 19.5% to 16.7% against the FPOI. There has been a narrowing of the gap also at key stage 2 (from 20.6% to18.1%) and key stage 3 (29.1% to 24%) against the CSI. The rate of improvement has been around 3% greater than for non e-FSM pupils in the Foundation Phase and key stage 2 and 5% at key stage 3. There has been a narrowing of the gap also in each of the five local authorities against most of these indicators and they are narrowest in the Vale. Against the Welsh averages the gap is (awaiting data). At the expected outcome/ level the gaps are narrowest in Bridgend and the Vale in the Foundation Phase and key stage 2 and in Cardiff, RCT and the Vale at key stage 3. In all cases there are much wider gaps in the performance of these two groups at the outcome/ level above the expected outcome/ level. At key stage 4 against the level 2+ threshold the gap has widened from 32.5% in 2012 to 34.2% in 2014. The pattern of performance varies between the local authorities. The gap widened in Bridgend and the Vale, reduced slightly in Merthyr and RCT and reduced more substantially in Cardiff by 2.6%. **More able and talented pupils** The rate of improvement at **outcome 6** in the Foundation phase, **level 5** at key stage 2 and **level 6+** at key stage 3 is greater than that at the expected outcome/ level. Performance is between 1% and 2% below Welsh averages in the	View of performance in 2012-2013 Initial view of performance in 2013-2014 National reading and numeracy test results 2013 and 2014 WG statistical release - end of foundation phase outcomes and National Curriculum teacher assessment of core subjects at key stages 2 and core and non-core subjects at key stage 3. Data tables at the FP and each key stage, KS4 spreadsheet Data on outcomes of specific groups

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Foundation Phase, close to the Welsh averages at key stage 2 and above except in mathematics at key stage 3. Performance is typically above Welsh averages in the Vale, close in Bridgend and Cardiff and below in RCT and Merthyr in primary schools. Performance is above the Welsh average at KS3 in the main in Cardiff, RCT and the Vale.

The proportion of entries reaching **grades A*/ A** at GCSE across the region as a whole is just above the Welsh average (20%/19.4%). It is just below the Welsh average in Bridgend (18.3%), below by some margin in Merthyr (11.7%) and RCT (15.7%) and above in the Vale (23.9%) and Cardiff 24%).

In some parts of the region too few pupils currently achieve 5 GCSEs at grades A*/A. There are wide variations ranging from 1.5% in Merthyr to 14.3% in the Vale.

At A level the proportion of entries reaching grade A* /A across the consortium is lower than the Welsh average (23.2%/29.7%). It is in line with the Welsh average in Cardiff (29.7%), below in the Vale (26.9%) and below by some margin in Bridgend (20%), RCT (15.6%) and Merthyr (14.3%).

Looked after children
The performance of looked after children is below that of all other pupils in the Foundation Phase and at all key stages. Against the FPOI, the CSI at key stages 2 and 3 and against the level 2+ threshold the gap is in each case around 30%. There are wide gaps also for each of the core subjects separately.

While there are variations in these outcomes between the local authorities the pattern of relative underperformance by this group is a consistent feature of performance.

Pupils with a special educational need
There are gaps in the outcomes achieved by pupils with a special educational need compared with those of other pupils. In general the gap is around 20% for pupils at school action, 40% at school action plus against the key indicators in the Foundation phase and at each key stage. Only about one in every ten pupils with a statement reached these indicators in 2014.

Around two thirds of pupils at school action in CSC reached the FPOI in 2014 similar to the position in each local authority. The proportion reaching the key stage 2 CSI was similar except in the Vale where 4 out of every five pupils reached this indicator. Just over half these pupils reached the key stage 3 CSI. Only one in every five of these pupils achieved the level 2 threshold in the region and in the local authorities. The proportion of pupils at school action reaching these key measures is lowest in RCT.

Minority ethnic pupils
Across the region as a whole the outcomes achieved by minority ethnic pupils are just below those of white UK pupils by around 2% in each case against the FPOI, the CSI at key stages 2 and 3 and against the level 2+threshold.

In Cardiff the gap is generally wider (around 4%), and similar in Merthyr. In Bridgend, RCT and the Vale minority ethnic pupils outperformed white UK pupils in 2014 in most cases.

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NEETS Up to 2013 there has been a sustained reduction in the number of young people aged 16 not in education, employment or training in most local authorities since 2009.Nevertheless, it is important that this trend continues as the percentage is still too high in four of the five authorities. In Merthyr and Bridgend the number has more than halved over this period. It has reduced by 45% in Cardiff, by a third in the Vale and 16% in RCT. For the region as a whole the percentage of NEETs in 2013 was 3.7%, a figure that is the same as the Welsh average. The figures are highest in Cardiff (4.9%) and lowest in Merthyr (1.9%). Early indications from unvalidated data suggest that this downward trend has continued in 2014. Up to 2013 there has also been a reduction since 2009 in the proportion of Y12 and Y13 young people who are NEET across the region as a whole. The proportion of 17 year olds who are NEET has nearly halved and the proportion of 18 year olds has reduced by around 3%. The proportion of NEET young people at Y12 is about half that at Y13 (2.3%/ 5.2%). For 17 year olds the reduction in each local authority have been around 2% (Bridgend and Cardiff) or 1% (RCT, Merthyr, Vale). The highest proportion is in RCT (3.2%). For 18 year olds the reductions have been 10% in RCT, 2% in Cardiff and the Vale and less than 1% in Bridgend and Merthyr. Other than in Merthyr (7.2%) the proportions are at or around the consortium's average except in Cardiff where the figure is lower (3.2%).	Youth engagement data and evaluation

1.3 Standards – learners' skills	
Evaluation	**Evidence**
In general in Bridgend, Cardiff and the Vale there are more pupils in the above average band (SS 115+) in reading and numeracy than nationally and fewer in RCT and the Vale. Bridgend and the Vale also have generally fewer pupils below the average band (SS-85) than nationally whereas Cardiff, RCT and Merthyr have more. In 2014 the proportion of pupils in all year groups with a **standardised score in reading of less than 85** was less that that nationally (13.4%) in the Vale (9.7%) and Bridgend (12.5%), similar in Cardiff (13.5%), and above in RCT (15.3%) and Merthyr (16.5%). For pupils **above the average band (greater than 115)** outcomes were higher than nationally (16.5%) in the Vale (22.7%) and Cardiff (18.4%) and lower in Bridgend (16.3%), RCT (12.9%) and Merthyr (12.3%). In the **numeracy procedural tests** there were fewer pupils with a **standardised score of less than 85** than nationally (13.9%) in the Vale (10.4%) and Bridgend (13.1%) and more in Cardiff (14.9%), RCT (17.6%) and Merthyr (16.1%). The proportion of pupils with a **standardised score greater than 115** was higher than that nationally (15.5%) in the Vale (20.8%), Cardiff (16.6%), similar in Bridgend (15.6%) and lower in RCT (11.3%) and Merthyr (11.9%). In the **numerical reasoning test** there were fewer pupils with a **standardised score of less than 85** than nationally (13.8%) in the Vale (10%), figures were the same in Bridgend and there were more in Cardiff (15.2%), RCT (17.6%) and Merthyr (18.0%).	Analysis of outcomes of reading, procedural and numerical reasoning tests. WG statistical bulletin Analysis of inspection recommendations 2010-2014

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The proportion of pupils with a **standardised score greater than 115** was higher than that nationally (14.8%) in the Vale (18.5%), Cardiff (15.2%), similar in Bridgend (14.9%) and lower in RCT (10.4%) and Merthyr (10.3%).

In most year groups and in all local authorities the **proportion of girls with a standardised score greater than 115 is higher than that for boys in reading** in both primary and secondary schools. **The reverse is true for standardised scores greater than 115 in the numeracy procedural and reasoning tests** in both primary and secondary schools.

Conversely, there are usually **more boys than girls with a standardised score of less than 85 in reading and both numeracy tests in virtually all year groups in both primary and secondary schools.**

Improving the standard of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are the most frequently occurring recommendations in inspection. In literacy and English the recommendations relate most often to improve pupils' extended and independent writing skills, followed by reading and occasionally pupils speaking and listening skills. In relation to numeracy and mathematics the weakness highlighted where the recommendations are more specific relate to pupils' written and mental skills with number and how these are applied and developed across the curriculum.
Improving the standard of pupils' ICT skills occurs more frequently as a recommendation in primary than in secondary schools and is often in these instances linked to the quality of provision and curricular planning for the development of ICT.

1.4 Standards – learners' Welsh language skills

Evaluation	Evidence
Performance has improved in Welsh in most respects but there are continuing gaps in the outcomes achieved by boys compared with girls and variations in otucomes between different schools. In Welsh second language outcomes have also improved at key stage 2. At key stage 4 nearly twice as many pupils sit the short course compared with the full course; results at the higher grades in the full course are much greater than for the short course. **Welsh first language** Performance has improved over the last three years in the **Foundation Phase** for the region as a whole and in each local authority at outcome 5+ and compares favourably with the Welsh average. (91.4%/89.8%). This is also the case at outcome 6, although there are wider variations between the local authortities and performance is below the Welsh average by 3%. There has been an upward trend also at level 4+ at **key stage 2** over the last three years in the region and in all local authorities, although there are variations in the extent of this improvement between the authorities. Performance is above the Welsh average and the rate of improvement has been about 2% higher than that nationally over this period. The improvement at level 5 has generally been greater than at level 4 and outcomes are also ahead of the Welsh average. Outcomes at **key stage 3** at level 5+ have also improved over this period and by a greater margin than for Wales (10%/ 6%) so that performance is now above the Welsh average by 1%. The improvements in each local authority are	Initial view of performance in 2013-2014 Data spreadsheets

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also substantial although they are only above the Welsh average in Cardiff. The improving trend is replicated at level 6+ and outcomes are above the Welsh average also by 1%.

In the Foundation Phase and key stage 2 there is around a 10% gap in the outcomes achieved by boys compared with girls in favour of the latter. At key stage 3 the gap has varied from year to year at level 5+ but has been typically more than 10%. Far more girls than boys have reached level 6+ over this period

Of the three attainment targets in Welsh at key stages 2 and 3 writing is the weakest especiallly for boys.
At key stage 4 over the last three years level 2 outcomes in Welsh have been up and down. In 2014 performance at level 2 at GCSE fell by nearly 4% and outcomes improved in only two schools in the region. Against the Welsh average for a level 2 qualification performance was – awaiting national data)

In 2014 16.5% of pupils sitting Welsh 1st language at GCSE obtained grades A*/ A and 69.4% A*-C (compared with X% and X% nationally- awaiting data) and 12.8%% and 69.4% % in the region in 2012. The proprotion of A*/A grades was above the average for the region in Cardiff (29.2%), just above in Bridgend (17%) and the Vale (16.6% and below in RCT (6.6%). 1101 pupils sat the Welsh 1st langauge GCSE in 2014 compared with 997 in 2012.

In Welsh literature in 2014 29.9% achieved A*/A and 83.5% A*-C compared with X % and X% nationally- awaiting data and 22.3% and 79% in the region in 2012. The proprotion of A*/A grades was above the average for the region in Cardiff (43.5%), just below in Bridgend (37.7%) and below in the Vale (23.7%) and RCT (15.8%).

At A level X pupils sat the Welsh 1st language examination compared with X in the previous year. The percentage achieving A*/A was X% and A*-C X% compared with X% and X% respectively at a national level awaiting data

Welsh second language
Key stage 2
The proportion of pupils reaching level 4+ in Welsh second language has risen by 11% over the last 3 years to stand at 70.8% in 2014. At level 5 the percentage has risen from 9% to 15%. These improvements are also reflected in the outcomes in each of the five local authorities. Girls outperformed boys by nearly 10% at level 4+ and 6% at level 5.
Key stage 3
The proportion reaching level 5+ has risen by nearly 11% compared with the position in 2012. The improvement at level 6+ is nearly 10%. The improvements are also reflected in the outcomes in each local authority. Girls outperformed boys by 16% at level 5+ and 21% at level 6+.

Key stage 4
Over the last three years the number of pupils sitting the full course has increased slightly (2014- 2961; 2012 – 2773); the number sitting the short course has increased significantly (2014 – 4552; 2012 – 3870). Far higher proportions of pupils entering the full course achieved the higher grades at GCSE when compared with those entering the short course.

In 2014 29.4% of entries in the full course in the region were at grades A*/A and 77% at A*-C. These figures were

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about 4% higher than in 2012. Outcomes were above the average for the region at A*/ A and A*-C in Bridgend (35.2%/ 90.1%), the Vale (34.6%/ 79.1%)) and Merthyr (36.1%/ 83.9%) and below in Cardiff (26%/ 74.1) and RCT (26.2%/ 71.9%).

 In the short course only 6.3% of entries in the region were at A*/A and only 42.6% at A*-C. These figures were 1% and 5% above the performance in 2012. Outcomes were above the average for the region at A*/ A and A*-C in Bridgend (7.3%/ 51.4%) and Cardiff (7.8/ 40.7%) similar in the Vale (6.4%/ 41.5%) and Merthyr (4.5%/ 44.3%) and below in RCT (3.4%/ 39.4%).

(At A level awaiting figures nationally)

1.5 Attendance and exclusion	
Evaluation	**Evidence**
Attendance Overall attendance rates for the region and for each local authority have shown sustained improvement over a three-year period and are well on track to meet the challenging targets set for 2016 (average attendance rate of 95% for both primary and secondary schools). Attendance improved by 1% for the region as a whole in 2013-2014 in secondary schools. There was improvement in each local authority with the exception of Merthyr (Bridgend 1.5%; Cardiff – 0.9%; Merthyr – -0.4%; RCT – 1.2%; Vale 0.9%). Attendance for the region has been in line with the national average for secondary schools for each of the last two years (93.6%). It is only 0.1% below that of GWe and ERW and is 0.5% better than for the EAS. Outcomes were above the Wales average in 2014 in Bridgend, Cardiff and the Vale and below in RCT and Merthyr. Compared with the other local authorities in Wales relative rankings are as follows: Vale 4th; Bridgend and Cardiff 7th; RCT 17th; Merthyr 19th. Since 2011 there has been improvement in all five local authorities although the rates of improvement vary (Bridgend 2.6%; Cardiff – 3.4%; Merthyr – 1.5%; RCT – 2.5%; Vale 2.9%). The rate of improvement has been greater than that nationally (2.2%) in all local authorities except Merthyr. Performance by schools compared with schools with similar proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals has also improved. In 2013-2014 over a third of schools are now in the first quarter and three out of every five in the first two quarters compared with only a quarter and two out every five respectively in 2012. The percentage in the bottom quarter has reduced from over a quarter to one in five in 2014. In primary schools a quarter of schools were in the top 25% in 2013 compared with 15% in the previous year. The percentage in the bottom 25% was 18% in 2013 compared with 28% in 2012. (awaiting 2014 figures)	Regional strategy and action plans WG statistical bulletins 2013 and 2014

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Up to 2013 there has also been improvement in attendance in primary schools although the pattern has been less consistent than in secondary schools and has varied more between local authorities. Overall attendance improved by only 0.1% for the region as a whole in 2012-2013 in primary schools but improved by 0.8% in 2013-2014. Provisional data for 2013-2014 indicate that there was improvement in each local authority (Bridgend 1.3%; Cardiff – 0.9%; Merthyr – -0.6%; RCT – 1.1%; Vale 1.1%).

In 2012-2013 attendance for the region in primary schools was 93.7% - the same as that nationally. Overall attendance is now 94.5% (awaiting Wales figures and rankings).
Between 2011 and 2014 there was improvement in all five local authorities although the rates of improvement vary (Bridgend 1.6%; Cardiff – 2%; Merthyr – 1.5%; RCT – 2.2%; Vale 1.6%).

The attendance of some groups vulnerable to underachievement compares less well with that of all pupils and is a contributor to underachievement by these pupils. For example, there is gap of 3% between the attendance of pupils who are e-FSM in the primary sector and a gap of 6% in secondary schools.

Exclusion
Overall schools have been successful over the last three years in reducing the incidence of exclusion. Alternatives to permanent exclusion are a stronger feature of practice generally. The use of fixed-term exclusion is also reducing overall but there is still scope to reduce this further. Improving behaviour is rarely a recommendation following inspection.

WG statistical bulletin March 2014

The number of permanent exclusions was over a third lower in secondary schools in 2012-2013 compared with the position in 2010-2011. The number of permanent exclusions has reduced significantly over the last three years in Cardiff, Merthyr and the Vale and the rate per thousand pupils compares favourably with the Welsh average. The number has fluctuated in Bridgend and RCT. The rate per thousand pupils in these authorities was close to the Welsh average in the previous two years but was well above in 2012-2013.

The number of fixed-term exclusions of five days or more has fallen substantially in Bridgend, Cardiff and Merthyr over the last three years but has risen in RCT and the Vale. The rate per thousand pupils was lowest in the Vale and highest in Cardiff (also the highest in Wales) in 2012- 2013 and was below the Welsh average in Bridgend and Merthyr.

The number of fixed-term exclusions of six days or more has also fallen over the last three years in Cardiff, Merthyr and RCT but has risen in Bridgend and the Vale. The rate per thousand pupils is lowest in the Vale and highest in Cardiff. It is below the Welsh average in Merthyr, RCT and the Vale.

The average days lost to all exclusion is highest in the Vale (2.7 days) and Merthyr (2.7) and lowest in RCT (2.2) and is also below the Welsh average of 2.5 days in Bridgend and Cardiff. Other than in Merthyr the average days lost to exclusion of 6 days or more is below the Welsh average of 9.7 days in each authority. The average days lost to exclusion of five days or less is at or below the Welsh average of 2 days in every case.

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Key Question 1: Areas for improvement

- Continue work to improve outcomes in language (English and Welsh) and especially mathematics in each local authority in the Foundation Phase and key stages 2 and 3 and improve outcomes against the level 2+ threshold at key stage 4.
- Secure further improvement against the level 1 threshold in all local authorities and especially in the Vale and Bridgend.
- Reduce to zero over the next two years the number of schools where less than 40% of pupils achieve the level 2+ threshold.
- Improve the outcomes achieved by groups vulnerable to underachievement especially pupils who are e-FSM and LAC and improve further the achievement of more able pupils.
- Maintain the current rates of improvement to meet the attendance targets set for 2015 and 2016 including in the primary sector in Bridgend and the Vale and the secondary sector in Merthyr and RCT.
- Continue work to reduce especially fixed-term exclusion further in secondary schools.

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Key Question 2: School Improvement

2.1. Monitoring, challenge, support and intervention	
Evaluation	**Evidence**
The Central South Wales Challenge The Central South Wales Challenge was launched in January 2014, is led by headteachers and is designed to develop a sustainable school-led system of improvement. This represents a step change in how school improvement responsibilities are understood and carried out. The Challenge has made rapid progress in a short time and is developing in different ways across the region. Headteachers have responded well to the focus on school-led improvement and collaborative learning processes but the extent to which this permeates every school varies. Most schools are actively participating in the development of shared improvement plans in the school improvement groups. Headteachers are clear about the need to strengthen accountability as schools take on a greater leadership role. Although there is evidence of early impact from the Pathfinder pairings, the approach is at an early stage of development. It will require more time to become embedded in policy and practice and to establish evidence about sustained improvement. **The National Model For School Improvement** The service has focused on improving partnership working with each local authority to enable them to fulfil their statutory functions in challenge, support and intervention. This is becoming more effective but there is still a need to improve quality and to bring greater consistency and rigour to the processes for supporting and monitoring the work in schools so that progress occurs as needed and variations in performance between schools are reduced. The service has begun to work well with the authorities' senior officers to provide appropriate challenge and support to schools. The work with the schools in the Schools Challenge Cymru is overseen by an experienced senior member of staff based in the consortium. There are indications that schools' leaders have responded positively to this climate of greater challenge and ambition and this is now beginning to be reflected in improved outcomes in primary, secondary and special schools. In Estyn's monitoring of local authorities the consortium's Framework for Challenge and Support in 2013-2014 was judged to be more robust than in previous years. In most cases there was a correlation with inspection outcomes. However, in a minority of cases there was a difference between categorisation and the outcomes of inspection. Further work needs to be done to improve the consistency with which judgements are made and to improve professional practice. Changes to the revised Framework For Challenge And Support and performance management procedures are intended to strengthen these aspects of the service's work. It will be important to monitor closely delivery and impact throughout the year, to keep the framework under review and refine further where necessary. The Framework For Challenge and Support 14-15 provides clearer expectations about key school improvement processes. It: • begins to identify schools requiring support earlier;	Central South Wales Challenge Plan Constitution of SIGs SIG plans Pathfinder plans Framework For Challenge and Support September 2013. SCC coordinator's documentation Framework For Challenge and Support September 2014 School Improvement Service Handbook Key Processes (for schools)

• reaffirms how challenge and support promote a self-improving school system including placing emphasis on governors and headteachers' self-evaluations; • supports the challenge adviser to use the categorisation process to focus on the ability to improve and levels of support; • retains capacity to intervene effectively in schools' where the ability to improve is not strong enough. **Inspection outcomes** Over the period 2010-2014 proportionately fewer special schools and primary schools have required follow up than secondary schools. It has risen in all phases in the latest year of the cycle with increases in all follow-up categories except special measures in each phase and significant improvement in secondary schools. With relatively few exceptions most schools have been removed from follow up within the required period post inspection. However, too many schools are still identified as requiring follow up after inspection. **Primary schools** Over the period 2010-2014 51% of schools required follow up – over a quarter required Estyn monitoring, 17% local authority monitoring and just over 5% significant improvement or special measures. Around 13% of schools provided excellent practice case studies. At local authority level the highest percentage requiring follow up was in Merthyr (61%) followed by RCT (52.6%), the Vale (46.1%), Bridgend (43.9%) and Cardiff (43.2%). However, the percentage requiring follow up has risen during the latest year of the cycle 2013-2014 to around two-thirds of schools with increases in all follow-up categories except special measures. This pattern is repeated in each of the local authorities except the Vale where the proportion of schools requiring follow up in 2013-2014 was similar to that of the four years of the cycle as a whole. **Secondary schools** From 2010-2014 65.7% of schools required follow up – two-fifths required Estyn monitoring and just over 10% significant improvement or special measures. At local authority level the highest percentage requiring follow up was in Merthyr (both schools inspected) followed by RCT (four out of every five), Cardiff (just over two thirds) the Vale (just under two thirds), Bridgend (one fifth). The percentage requiring follow up rose during the latest year of the cycle 2013-2014 and stood at 71.4% The increases were largely due to schools requiring Estyn monitoring: none required significant improvement or special measures during this period. **Special schools and PRUs** From 2010-2014 just over a quarter of schools/ PRUs inspected required follow-up- principally Estyn monitoring (one fifth) and significant improvement (6%). Analysis of the outcomes of inspections indicates that the following aspects are the main recommendations in all three sectors: raising standards in the core subjects of English, Welsh and mathematics, in literacy and numeracy and Welsh second language (primary); improving the outcomes achieved by more able pupils; improving leadership (improving quality at senior and middle leaders levels, the impact of monitoring and evaluation on improving standards and provision, the exercise of accountability and clarity of roles and responsibilities); improving teaching; improving	Inspection outcomes database Inspection recommendations analysis

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assessment (assessment and planning, accuracy of teacher assessment, quality of written feedback, pupils' involvement in assessing own learning); improving governance (the role of governors in holding the school to account for performance); improving attendance.	
Categorisation In September 2013, two out of every 5 schools were in categories C and D. By phase the figures were – primary schools just over a third, secondary schools two thirds; special schools and PRUs one in five. The provisional categories at the beginning of September 2014 represent a reduction in the number of schools in D (red support- from 10.3% to 7.1%), a reduction in C (amber support from 29% to 26.7%), a rise in B (yellow support from 40.5% to 47.1%) and a reduction in A (green support from 20.1% to 19.1%). This pattern was the same for primary schools separately. In special schools and PRUs there were fewer schools in categories A and D and more in C and D. In secondary schools there were more in categories A and B and fewer in categories C and D. Although it is anticipated that the application of the new national categorisation system (currently under way) will lead to a greater incidence of schools requiring amber or red support in the shorter term, there will be a need to work hard to increase the proportion of schools requiring green support and to reduce the underperformance or slow progress underlying those schools that require amber or red support.	Categorisation analysis
The degree of challenge underpinning the dialogue with schools has been sharper and more focused during 2013-2014. The revised Framework for 2014-2015 places much greater emphasis on the governors' and the headteacher's evaluation of strengths and areas for improvement and the role of the challenge adviser in validating or challenging the assessment. Despite the delay in finalising the national categorisation model the service and local authorities are making good progress in implementing the national model. There is a clear line of sight between the previous approach to categorisation within the region and the emphasis on standards and the national criteria for the ability to improve.	Framework For Challenge and Support September 2014 School Improvement Service Handbook Key Processes (for schools)
Support for schools' self-evaluation The service has provided sound guidance to support self-evaluation and has advocated use of Estyn's guidance manuals to support the process in schools. Challenge advisers scrutinise schools' self-evaluation reports and processes and provide appropriate support to improve the link with improvement planning where required. The school's self-evaluation as the starting point for the review, challenge and support meeting is now an explicit expectation of headteachers and governors. However, there will be a continuing need to focus on improving self-evaluation and improvement planning in schools requiring amber or red support in particular in response to the variations in quality that are evident.	Self-evaluation guidance
Brokering of support Systems that enable challenge advisers to broker support for schools requiring amber or red support are improving but there is still a need to extend the range of support available and to make access more systematic. The CSW Challenge is beginning to draw on the capacity of strong schools to offer support to secure high quality teaching and learning and leadership. Good progress is being made in developing partnership working between schools through the Challenge and in support of national partnership programmes, with some early evidence of impact. More attention now needs to be given to strengthening intervention especially in schools causing most concern, to building capacity	

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through school-to-school support and through recommending to the local authority structural solutions such as federation or executive headship. There has been a strong response to the Welsh Government's lead and emerging practitioner imitative. The involvement of schools in the region compares very favourably with that of schools in the other three regions in the secondary, primary and special schools' strands of this work. There is growing evidence of impact in a number of the partnerships and positive external evaluation. In close collaboration with the local authorities strategies involving the services of experienced and effective headteachers working alongside challenge advisers, as well as support from other challenge advisers within the service, have also been successful in a number of schools where there are most concerns.	NFER evaluation of the WG lead and emerging practitioner initiative.
Monitoring and reporting schools' progress Partnership or leadership reviews undertaken in collaboration with schools and local authority officers are an increasing feature of the diagnosis of schools' needs prior to support but need to be a more consistent feature. They are successful in establishing where improvement is needed with more accuracy as well as contributing to capacity building where schools' leaders and practitioners are involved. Meetings to review progress are now following more consistently the procedures within the Framework (half-termly – red, termly – amber) but there is still a need to keep under review the balance between the time devoted to the review of performance with each school and the time devoted to intervening with schools requiring amber or red support.	Framework For Challenge and Support September 2014
Senior challenge advisers and challenge advisers work closely with officers in the local authorities where robust action is needed. The extent to which directors hold headteachers and chairs of governors to account where underperformance occurs is improving. Changes to leadership involving the use of statutory powers and the use of challenge advisers and experienced headteachers to review progress and provide support have been successful in a number of schools where there are most concerns. All recognise the need to secure greater consistency in how criteria are applied in intervention so that prompt action can be taken and there is a commitment to improving this aspect of the work across the region.	Consortium's recommendations and local authorities' correspondence with schools including warning notices.
Quality assurance The service's performance management procedures have been revised to make a clearer link between the work of challenge advisers and their accountability for monitoring the impact of intervention in schools. Quality assurance procedures involving the service's senior challenge advisers and the local authorities' senior officers are being implemented. However, there is still a need to improve consistency in the quality of writing, accuracy of judgements and use of evidence.	Protocol, for accompanied visits Schools' review reports. Case studies.
Use of data The use of data by challenge advisers in conjunction with the local authorities and in most schools is improving. Schools have access to a wide range of relevant performance, benchmarking and other comparative data and include data at whole-school level, individual pupil level and for specific groups.	Challenge advisers' annual reports on performance, progress reports and school visit reports.

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The data are used effectively by challenge advisers in preparation for the review, challenge and support meetings in individual schools and, along with other relevant information, as the basis for validating or challenging the school's view of its standards and ability to improve.	School level data packs
Increasingly challenge advisers have access to data in real time during the year which allows for more effective monitoring and challenge at points where schools still have time to address shortcomings. This is supported through: • dialogue each term between challenge advisers and schools on the information generated from schools' tracking systems and evidence that intervention is making a difference for pupils where progress is a concern; • access at four points during the year for all secondary schools to the latest data about pupils progress against the key indicators at key stage 4; • access in some local authorities to in year data about attendance.	Pupil level data packs Letters to secondary schools for gathering key stage 4 in year data and excel spreadsheet
There is a need to improve the extent to which data and intelligence are used to inform strategic planning and so the capacity of the data team has recently been increased. .	
Target setting The service provides suitable guidance on target setting that promotes high expectations for every pupil. The service expects schools to make reference to comparative data to test whether targets are challenging enough (highest FFT estimates, placing the school in the higher 2 benchmarking quartiles, what targets mean for rates of progress for individual pupils). Schools' individual targets and aggregated targets are shared with the local authority and challenged further where necessary.	Guidance on target setting Agenda for workshops
Performance in 2014 suggests that better progress is being made towards more challenging targets especially for more able pupils. Nevertheless, the extent to which schools set targets that are challenging enough still varies too much between schools. In particular, the expectations and performance of some larger secondary schools serving more advantaged areas of the region are not good enough at present. In these and other instances: targets for pupils' future achievement need to be higher; learning and teaching and improvement planning require greater focus to achieve higher expectations; the impact of senior and middle leadership on improving outcomes and the associated accountability need to be sharper.	
Tracking pupils' progress The service provides sound guidance on effective approaches to tracking pupils' progress and targeting intervention. Challenge advisers will routinely discuss a school's evidence about pupils' progress and the extent to which pupils are on track. This is supported by the collection of in-year data especially at key stage 4.	Quality standards for tracking pupils' progress.
Most schools track pupils' progress. However, the rigour of the judgements and information underpinning the information recorded is still too variable and as such has less impact than it should. In primary schools over half of schools are using a commercial scheme; in secondary schools most use the SIMs assessment modules for this purpose. Overall, there is a need to establish greater uniformity in the systems and processes in use and to share the best practice to achieve much greater consistency across the region as a whole.	

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Collaboration with local authorities' services Collaboration with those school improvement services that have remained within the local authority is effective in some instances. Staff still based in the local authorities inclusion and social inclusion services are appropriately involved in supporting challenge advisers' understanding of the local context. Where collaboration is at its best this has led to case conferences to agree specific actions. However, this is not yet systematic or consistent enough in the work in schools across the five authorities.	
Teacher assessment Challenge advisers scrutinise teachers' assessment alongside evidence from pupils' work during reviews and moderation of teacher assessment is discussed during review meetings in schools. However, moderation of teacher assessment on a cluster basis is inconsistent. In advance of any strengthening of the national system the service is, in 2014-2015, implementing a number of actions in response to the perceived weaknesses. (training for cluster lead moderators; expectations for how cluster and cross-phase moderation should be carried out; scrutiny of the arrangements in the spring and summer terms 2015; establishment of a verification process).	Proposal and scoping paper
Headteachers' performance management All challenge advisers have carried out headteachers' performance management and there is now a much stronger connection between headteachers' objectives and the key areas of improvement identified for the school. The process has been evaluated highly in feedback by schools.	Walk through guidance for challenge advisers

2.2 Support for school improvement – work in raising standards and improving quality in priority areas, including support for teaching, leadership and governance

Evaluation	Evidence
Authorities commission from the consortium support services in priority areas where there is a need to raise standards. The arrangements represent a growing understanding of the interrelationship between the commissioning of services and the accountability for achieving agreed outcomes. Arrangements are developing but need to become more embedded. **Closing the gap** Appropriate use is being made of the recommendations in the pupil deprivation grant (PDG) guidance, government policy directives and advice, research, evidence and guidance from Estyn to inform policy and provision. The consortium provides both challenge and support to build the capacity of schools to meet the needs of this vulnerable group. Results to date show some narrowing of the gap in the primary sector and at key stages 3 and 4 on the basis of improvement by both e-FSM and non e-FSM pupils. At key stage 4 while there is improvement in some parts of the region this is not yet consistent enough. Overall, the gap between pupils eligible for FSM and those not is still too wide. Challenge advisers analyse annually schools' data and their PDG spending plans as part of the dialogue about the	Operational plan closing the gap, audit tool, presentation

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appropriateness of schools' improvement planning. Spending plans that are inappropriate are challenged. Analysis of schools' spending plans in 2013/14 indicate that spending plans were appropriate but that in a minority planning was not robust enough and did not focus use of the grant sufficiently in the areas for which it is intended. Scrutiny is being strengthened in 2014/15 through publication of schools' plans. Initial work has been done to identify the most effective practice but this is at an early stage of development. The consortium is giving priority to support to build the capacity of schools to learn from each other and to have a greater impact on standards. 28% of SIG improvement plans include priorities related to this agenda, although this work is still at a developmental stage and requires more evidence of sustained impact. Other action to help build capacity building includes: the development of case studies to identify and share effective practice; use of Estyn publications; the development of an audit tool (currently piloted in 5 schools) to support schools' self-evaluation; support for strategies that address the social and emotional needs; work with Higher Education to design an evaluation methodology; access to successful initiatives (Achievement for All, Investors in Families - 174 schools in the region have achieved the award and 17 re-accreditation).	Audit tool
Literacy and numeracy The overarching strategy that guides the work encompasses appropriately the key national priority areas outlined in the school effectiveness grant circular. The retained capacity through the strategic advisory team provides effective intensive support for schools where the need to improve is greatest and a core programme of good quality professional development and support for all schools. The focus of the bespoke commissioned work in schools within each authority has been agreed with senior officers in the authorities and is informed by application of criteria (end of key stage performance, quartile positions, national test data, categorisation). Analysis of areas for improvement from schools' data, first hand contact with schools and inspection is also used to inform the support provided (52 primary schools supported in literacy in 2013/14 and 99 in numeracy). There is emphasis on the main areas of weakness (literacy- pupils' oracy skills, improving extended writing, implementing the LNF, effective guided group reading, improving phonics teaching and learning to raise standards in reading and writing; numeracy- developing pupil's mental and written skills with number, use of data including national test analysis). Quantitative evidence from schools' performance, from data relating to individual pupils' progress and qualitative evidence from improvement in the skills of teaching and support staff through contact with the classroom and from teachers' and headteachers' feedback suggest a positive impact in most cases. Provision of intensive support in targeted schools is continuing in 2014/15 (37 schools in literacy, 38 in numeracy). Effective use is made of interventions with a track record of success. (literacy -Catch Up, Rapid Readers and Language Links; numeracy - Catch Up numeracy and NIPpers). Evidence suggests a strong impact on standards in literacy from schools' involvement in Success For All (8 schools in 2013/14;18 in 2014/15) Teachers' professional development is supported effectively through well attended literacy and numeracy primary network meetings with a focus on the effective analysis and use of national test data. (159 attendees for literacy 252	Operational plans literacy and numeracy PID evaluations Catch Up impact Outcomes analysis reports Case studies Subject leader network evaluations Support Framework Support overviews RCT and Cardiff LA SER SEG action plan monitoring Training session evaluations

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attendees for numeracy from across the region).

There is an increasing emphasis on the identification and deployment of outstanding teachers of literacy and numeracy, although the strategy requires further development so that it makes a greater contribution to capacity building and sharing of effective practice. (50 recruited in literacy and 24 in numeracy; 77 schools supported in 2013-2014).

Priority has been given to commissioning support and intervention in secondary schools where the need to improve outcomes in English and especially mathematics is greatest. The improvement in outcomes in 2014 notwithstanding, mathematics remains the weakest of the four core subjects and there is still a need to address weaknesses in English or Welsh in some schools and to reduce the gender gap. (In 2013/14 26 secondary schools supported in English/literacy- including implementation of the Tactical Teaching programme- and 22 in mathematics/numeracy by the service's specialists; in 2014/15 25 supported in English and 23 in mathematics).

All secondary schools have access to core and central provision including network meetings. Evaluations in response to intervention programmes and from central training indicate high quality provision.

The service has been active in supporting national programmes designed to improve outcomes in English and mathematics against the level 2+ threshold (11 schools involved in Education London support programme and 10 in the level 2 initiative within the region). A good start has been made to implementation of the Qualified for Life project to prepare practitioners for the changes in GCSE qualifications and equip learners with skills for further study, the workplace and the home. Through these programmes and the additional support from the service's central teams outcomes improved substantially in 2014 in English and mathematics and against the level 2+ threshold.

The service is innovative in its response to addressing weaknesses particularly in mathematics. The Count on Success revision programme in 2014 was rated very highly by both pupils and teachers and will be repeated and extended to involve English in 2014/15 (all schools participating and 20 Y11 pupils per school in each subject). Links have been established with higher education to provide additional capacity from mathematics graduates in support of key stage 4 pupils.

Leadership development

Appropriate arrangements have been made to support the development of middle and senior leaders. A number of commissioned programmes alongside an 'Aspiring Leadership Programme' for primary, secondary and special schools, run by current school leaders, build on previous programmes and effective practice at local authority level and are evaluated strongly by participants.

Leadership strategy and operational plan
Peer review model.

The commitment to the development of a sector-led, self-improving system is reflected in the establishment of hub schools, specialist centres and peer review. These draw on research and best practice and are necessary developments to deliver the region's ambitions to improve significantly the quality of leadership and self-evaluation.

Good leadership has been provided by the Central South Wales Challenge's strategy group of headteachers that has

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been critical to the rapid progress made. Headteachers have shown a willingness increasingly to take on a system-wide leadership role as reflected in the appointment of convenors to steer the work of each school improvement group and through engagement in the pathfinder initiative. Evidence suggests positive involvement of most schools. However, the work needs to be embedded and made more consistent and more evidence of impact needs to be developed.	Agendas and minutes of strategy group and convenors sharing events.
The consortium has responded effectively to the requirement to administer the grant and organise support for newly appointed headteachers. All are matched carefully with a mentor and have access to core professional development sessions focusing especially on the analysis and used of data, headteachers' performance management and securing effective learning and teaching (26 newly appointed headteachers in 2013/14; 20 in 2014/15).	
The application and assessment process relating to the National Professional Qualification for Headship is managed very successfully. Potential candidates are given good advice prior to application. The selection and awarding processes are carried out rigorously. Experienced headteachers within the region are deployed effectively as members of the initial selection panel, to provide support to candidates and as assessment panel members.(2013/14 - 73 applications; 36 selected; 23 awarded)	
The consortium also acts as the appropriate body for the induction of newly qualified teachers (NQTs) on behalf of the five local authorities. School-based mentors receive effective training to carry out their role. This is also the case for the 66 external mentors who support NQTs across the region. The programme of professional development for NQTs is well developed in line with the six priorities as set out by the Welsh Government (literacy, numeracy, ALN, behaviour management, reflective practice and reducing the impact of poverty, plus Welsh and Welsh second language). Good provision is also made for short-term supply NQTs through twilight briefing sessions.	Case studies
Training and support for governing bodies remains a responsibility of the local authority at this point. The consortium has undertaken a significant commission on their behalf to provide the mandatory data training for governors in 2013/14 and this is continuing in 2014/15. The training is evaluated positively in the main but increasingly governors want training that is more responsive to particular needs. Challenge advisers support governors well through meetings to discuss schools' performance and their ability to improve, through attendance at governors' meetings in some schools causing concern and through support for governors' panels as part of headteachers' performance management.	Governor training data pack
A report commissioned from Governors' Wales into the provision of support for governors in Central South Wales recognises strengths in many areas but also a need for improvement and for more consistency in the provision of support and development opportunities across the region. The recent establishment of a governors' representative strategy group represents an important step that involves very experienced and effective governors in steering and influencing policy and practice.	Report commissioned from Governors Wales
There is a strong consensus that action needs to be taken to strengthen how governors' support needs are identified, to develop more flexible and bespoke provision in response and to intervene and provide support where governance is less effective. There is also a need to communicate and meet more directly with governors so that they understand	

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more fully the Central South Wales Challenge and can bring to bear their support.	
Learning and Teaching The region is committed to the development of an innovative model for school-to-school support to achieve significant improvement in the quality of learning and teaching. The learning and teaching strategy has been positively received by schools' leaders who are working collaboratively to further develop the strategy so that it meets the needs of schools and their learners.	Learning and teaching operational plan Business desk bookings database
The investment in the OTP and ITP programmes is beginning to bear fruit. The programmes are highly regarded through teachers' evaluations and, through the appointment of a coordinator, the consortium is ensuring that consistency of delivery and quality assurance of the programmes is robust. Good work has been done to equip the region itself with the capacity to take forward the programmes. (5 schools accredited to run Olevi OTP and ITP programmes currently – further 4 by early 2015). There has been a strong take-up of the OTP programme (233 teachers) but not yet enough take up of the ITP programme (67 teachers).	OTP/ ITP records Application process for improvement hubs and specialist centres
Capacity is being built further through four additional secondary school improvement hubs offering a wide range of programmes designed to improve learning and teaching and leadership training for schools across the region drawing on these schools' particular areas of expertise.	
Attendance The development of a regional strategy has involved effective collaboration between the education welfare services in each of the five authorities. The importance of attending school has a high profile across the region: publicity and media campaigns have brought attendance effectively to the attention of parents.	Attendance regional strategy and action plans
In several authorities, the council's community leadership role has been strong where, for example, it has expressed clear expectations with regard to taking holidays in term time. Challenge advisers and local authority officers have reinforced the strong link between attendance, achievement and well being in their work with schools. The provision of in-year data has supported self-evaluation more effectively and has brought problems with attendance more swiftly to the attention of governors in some instances. Good work has been done to provide schools with the tools and strategies to evaluate strengths and weaknesses and to focus their improvement work more keenly. However, there is still scope to achieve greater consistency in some aspects of policy and practice across the region.	
The delegation in some parts of the region of more resources to schools to support them in exercising their responsibility for improving attendance has had a positive impact on outcomes. The sharing of effective practice between schools is now more prominent and there is more effective collaboration between education welfare officers and other agencies to target intervention where there are concerns about attendance. More structured professional development is improving quality and consistency in education welfare services.	
As a result of this strategic approach, good progress has been made over the last three years in reducing absence. The improvements have sometimes been significant across the region and the constituent authorities, although there are still variations and a need to bear on improving attendance still further.	

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Welsh

Extensive support is provided through the team of Welsh in Education Officers (WEOs) funded through the Welsh in Education Grant. The impact of the team's work is reflected in improved overall end-of-key stage outcomes at key stage 2 and key stage 3 in particular in both Welsh and Welsh second language and in the outcomes achieved in particular schools. Data from end of key stage results indicates improving standards at KS2. These improvements notwithstanding there are continuing weaknesses in reading and writing and there are still too many variations in standards within and between schools.

The composition and deployment of the Welsh in Education Officers (WEOs) teams reflects these priorities (3 officers in the Welsh-medium sector and 12 in English-medium primary schools). The Welsh-medium sector has much potential for the development of school-to- school support, with strong, well-led cluster working in some instances. However, this is still at an early stage of development and needs to be more consistent across the region.

Criteria are used to determine the level of differentiated support provided in schools. (baseline assessments; CSC categorisation; KS2 Welsh second language teacher assessments; ESTYN reports; individual schools' identification of need; teachers' Welsh language skills). Standardisation and moderation processes to strengthen teacher assessment are a particular focus. Networks for heads of departments in Welsh-medium schools and heads of departments in Welsh second language in English medium schools are successful in sharing practice between schools and in supporting schools to prepare for the new GCSE specifications.

Good quality curriculum support is also commissioned for both Welsh and Welsh second language in response to aspects that are areas for improvement. Bespoke consultancy visits and central training focus on developing the role of the curriculum leader, Welsh for Head Teachers and new resources. The intensive Welsh language course demonstrates a positive effect on standards and teaching (50% of schools have attended up to 2014).

Foundation Phase

Performance in the Foundation Phase within the region does not compare as well as it should with data nationally and so there is a continuing need to improve outcomes further. Professional development needs of schools are identified by drawing on the following sources of information: consultation with headteachers and local authority personnel; analysis of data; Estyn inspection outcomes and Welsh Government proposals.

In addition to meeting statutory requirements through the national training programme the Foundation Phase team has responded appropriately to specific needs within the region and in individual schools derived from requests for support from challenge advisers, analysis of data and evidence from direct contact with schools through, for example, reviews. (focuses - improving end of Foundation Phase moderation and assessment, development of leadership skill, improving teaching of literacy, Welsh language development, numeracy and thinking skills). Notes of visit and progress reports document impact from school support.

There is high take up for training events with 2717 practitioners participating during the last academic year and

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Sidebar (right column):

Literacy strategy and action plan (Welsh)
Strategy and action plan Welsh second language
WEG action plan monitoring
WEOs' reports and baseline assessments
End of Key Stage Teachers' Assessments
Evaluations of Meetings
Training Evaluations

Foundation Phase operational plan
Notes of visit
WG training returns

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evaluations are strong.	
ICT for Learning The consortium offers a range of support for ICT to: raise standards in the subject and across the curriculum; support schools and LAs with the LiDW grant; ensure that e-safety is a high priority. The quality of support is good and is evaluated positively by schools. There is good collaboration with the Welsh Government to support implementation of Hwb+ and to provide teachers with the skills to make effective use of digital technology as a tool for learning and teaching and to share materials and practice. Improving the standard of pupils' ICT skills occurs more frequently as a recommendation in primary than in secondary schools and is often in these instances linked to the quality of provision and curricular planning for the development of ICT.	ICT operational plan
SACRE The Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) of the five local authorities receive specialist professional support of good quality from the consortium to enable the five SACREs to advise the local authorities on matters related to collective worship and religious education. Standards in religious education are monitored comprehensively on an annual basis through analysing examination results, monitoring inspection reports and giving consideration to school self-evaluation reports. Schools are informed on a regular basis of any materials to support religious education and collective worship. Successful training has been provided for teachers, through cooperation with the Wales Association of SACREs, on key stage 3 levels and through a national conference with a key focus on literacy and numeracy in religious education. The five SACREs publish detailed Annual Reports outlining their work and discussions during the academic year and these are sent to Welsh Government for monitoring.	SACRE Annual Reports
Physical literacy The PESS team located in the region has worked effectively in partnership with schools and sports development units to monitor, challenge, support and intervene. The work of the team is suitably informed by analysis of data, inspection reports and evidence underpinning the national priority. Key focuses are: leadership development; improving teaching (26 professional networks and 66 professional learning communities established) identification and sharing of effective practice to exemplify how physical literacy contributes to whole school improvement in literacy, numeracy, wellbeing and closing the gap. (18 secondary schools and 61 primary involved in particular elements of the programme.	PESS Strategic Plan PESS Course brochure. PESS MI PESS Case Studies
14-19 The 14-19 regional budget is managed effectively by regional representatives drawn from the constituent LAs. A regional plan, approved by the Welsh Government, has been agreed for the last 3 years with an equitable distribution of funds. Appropriately, the plan has prioritised expenditure aimed at external collaborative vocational provision and learner support services. The support is closely aligned to the Youth Engagement Framework and there is growing evidence that the work is impacting positively on standards at KS4 in schools by increasing the proportion of pupils reaching the level 2 and level 1 thresholds and in contributing to the decline in the number of NEETs across the region. All schools across the region meet or exceed the requirements of the Learning & Skills Measure at both KS4	Annual Regional Development Plan Annual Self –review and Quality Improvement Plans for each LA LA NEETs statistics across Approval of RNDP by WG

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and Post 16. Work is being done to set out how the national model may look in April 2015 through the region. Recently the capacity to take forward this work has been improved through the services of the 14-19 regional co-ordinator in recognition of the significant challenges ahead relating to the new qualifications framework, the implementation of the revised Welsh Bac. and the need to ensure the curriculum meets the needs of all learners including those vulnerable to underachievement and to becoming NEET. **Outdoor Education** The consortium, on behalf of the five local authorities ensures that all educational establishments follow the All Wales Guidance for Educational Visits endorsed by the Welsh Government, Health & Safety and the Outdoor Education Advisors Panel. All schools are fully signed up to the Evolve online system for the registration and evidence of all school led off-site activities. Each school has an established educational visits coordinator trained and supported by the consortium to ensure that all visits in the UK and abroad comply with the national guidance for off-site activities. A very successful ongoing training programme supports the nominated coordinator in each establishment to achieve and maintain the required qualifications.	Published position paper LMI and destination reports from Links and Capita Programme of support November to May for WBQ
Key Question 2: Areas for Improvement: • Implement and keep under review the revised Framework For Challenge And Support and continue to develop consistency, quality and robustness in how challenge advisers carry out challenge and support. • Bring yet more pace to the rate of improvement and work with schools' leaders to ensure that it is continuous and sustained over time in all phases and key stages. • Reduce variations in performance between schools, including schools where performance is flat or coasting, and the number of schools requiring follow-up after inspection and strengthen further the range of interventions and sources of support especially in schools requiring red support. • Develop further the arrangements for brokering and commissioning support. • Improve significantly collaboration between challenge advisers and officers in those services that have remained with the local authority. • Through the Central South Wales Challenge, continue the work to develop school-led school-to-school support to build the capacity of the system as a whole to be self-improving.	

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Key Question 3: Leadership and management

3.1 strategic planning, improving quality and the impact of leadership from the consortium	
Evaluation	**Evidence**
Strategic planning The managing director, directors in each local authority and senior officers together provide clear strategic direction that addresses appropriately both national and regional priorities. Key decisions have been made about the long-term vision for the region and there is evidence to suggest this gaining ground rapidly. Nevertheless, all senior leaders are realistic about the scale of the continuing challenge. The results in 2013-2014 are a positive step forward but from a starting point that all recognise was too low. The improvement secured thus far must be built upon and sustained at a greater pace so that all children and young people attending the region's schools receive an education of the highest quality. The vision for the future of the schools' system has been well articulated but will continue to require reinforcement to ensure full understanding and support. The Central South Wales Challenge advocates that if school improvement is to be sustained over the longer term schools' leaders must be willing to support and challenge each other and take greater responsibility for the direction of the system and for standards in all schools. There is a clear line of sight between this vision and the Central South Consortium's key documents. The service's business plans and the revised Framework For Challenge And Support consolidate, through their key processes and actions, the commitment to a self-improving schools' system. The cabinet members for education in all five local authorities provide good leadership through their commitment to high expectations for all learners in the region and to combating the effects of socio-economic disadvantage on attainment. Through the joint committee lead elected members and chief executives provide strong support for the direction of travel within the region. Although at an early stage of development, the implementation of the Challenge has made rapid progress in a short time. Effective use has been made of national and international research evidence and expertise in working with headteachers to set the strategic direction. The importance of a sense of moral purpose and collaborative working between schools' leaders and practitioners is beginning to permeate thinking at all levels in the system. **Improving quality** The consortium's business plan and the associated operational plans represent an appropriate response to the requirements of the national model for school improvement. The self-evaluation process draws on relevant data at national, regional, local, school and pupil levels, the outcomes of schools' and the local authorities' inspections, challenge advisers' work,. However, there is still a need to improve the evidence from specific initiatives and work n particular schools and to involve other key stakeholders in the process.	Regional statement of shared ambition and intent Central South Consortium's business plan 2014-2015. Local authorities' annexes South Wales Challenge Plan Framework For Challenge and Support . . Service's summary and full SER; Operational pans for literacy, numeracy, reducing low achievement, level 2+, teaching, leadership and

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There is a strong correlation between the business plan and the priorities identified in each of the local authorities' post inspection action plans that recognises those aspects that are of common concern.The service is beginning to respond more effectively to the particular needs of individual authorities where these are not covered by the main business plan through a series of local authority annexes but this still requires further development. There is increasing evidence that leadership within the service in partnership with the local authorities is having a positive impact on performance as demonstrated through outcomes and Estyn's monitoring visits. However, too many schools still require follow up following inspection. **Partnership with schools, local authorities and other groups** The extent of involvement and commitment of headteachers has exceeded the early expectations. The vast majority of schools have joined school improvement groups, have set out plans with outcome measures. They are now actively working with other schools in their school improvement groups, although at this early stage the depth of involvement and the quality of the planning vary. There is further evidence of the commitment to partnership working in the fact that the region's schools are very well represented in all three strands (primary, special and secondary) of the Welsh Government's lead and emerging practitioner programme. External evaluation and evidence from schools' improvements in outcomes indicate a positive impact of this collaboration in a majority of cases. There are good working relationships with officers in each authority. Staff still based in the authorities' services are appropriately involved in supporting challenge advisers' understanding of the local context. However, there is a need to strengthen joint working with these services. Communication with stakeholders is increasingly effective but there is a need to strengthen this further especially in respect of the wider community, business and through families. Through face-to-face briefings, headteachers' meetings and through regular newsletters and correspondence schools are provided with up-to-date information on developments but there is still scope to strengthen aspects of communication with schools further. Links are beginning to be developed with higher education that have the potential to extend and enrich learning opportunities for the region's young people, to support and accredit professional development for teachers and to contribute to external evaluation of the region's work.	attendance. Team plans for Welsh and the Foundation Phase. Post inspection action plans for Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr, RCT and the Vale School Improvement groups: configuration of groups, SIG plans, Pathfinder plans

3.2 Accountability, scrutiny, performance management, roles and responsibilities including the relationship with local authorities	
Evaluation	**Evidence**
Governance The governance arrangements are appropriately informed by the six fundamental principles of the CIPFA/ SOLACE governance framework and enshrined in the legal agreement which was signed by all five local authorities in December 2013. The restructure of the organisation has required a new legal agreement which has also had full support and which is in the process of being signed. The agreement provides a sound framework for the allocation of	Legal agreement Agendas, minutes of joint committee and reports concerning

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responsibility and accountability to a Joint Committee, an executive board, an operational management group and a host authority.	constitution and governance.
Rhondda-Cynon-Taf as the host authority provides a range of support services of good quality to enable the consortium to function effectively. These include HR services, a range of financial, payroll and audit services, as well as services covering information technology infrastructure, information management, estates, legal advice and health and safety.	
The organisation, working closely with the directors of education and elected members, has acted promptly to respond to the Welsh Government's expectations concerning governance in the national model. In particular, the post of managing director has now been filled on a substantive basis. Appointments have been made to the executive board and governors' group and both have met this term.	
Although some elements of the framework have been in place from the outset others are new and so further time will be required to develop and embed working practices and the related responsibilities.	
Accountability The roles of the Joint Committee, the Advisory Board (previously executive board) the directors' steering group and the operational group are now more clearly set out than previously. Lines of accountability are now better understood by those who are closely involved in the governance arrangements. However, the relative roles and responsibilities of the consortium and local authorities and the related accountabilities are not yet well enough understood by the wider schools system and local authority officers and elected members who are less directly involved in contact with the consortium. It will be important that this is addressed so that the potential of regional working to secure further improvement at pace can be fully realised.	Accountability framework
The working relationships between the managing director and the directors in the five authorities are a strength and are effective in determining strategic direction and decision making. There are good working relationships too between senior officers in the consortium and the heads of service through the operational board. The work of the board is increasingly focused on the need to ensure consistent high quality delivery.	Agendas and minutes of directors' meetings Agendas and minutes of senior leadership team meetings, operational board meetings.
Arrangements have been made to provide each authority with progress reports that demonstrate the extent to which the service required has been provided as required. However, the process needs to be strengthened through sharper evaluation of specific needs and intended outcomes by the client and a greater focus on the needs highlighted by the provider.	Business plan and local authorities' annexes
The Joint Committee provides strong support for senior officers, shares, and has a good understanding of, the values and ambitions underpinning the region's priorities. Members of the committee participate well in debate and discussion and are increasingly effective in their questioning. However, more time is needed to develop the committee's involvement in determining strategic direction and their role in holding senior officers to account for performance.	Agendas and minutes of Joint Committee meetings

Annual reports on schools' performance for the scrutiny committee are now a feature of the work of each authority. Increasingly, scrutiny committees are provided with data and related information of good quality that help them hold schools and officers to account for performance. Training is being provided to scrutiny members in some local authorities. However, work to improve elected members' understanding of performance data and their skills in holding officers to account requires greater consistency.	Examples of annual reports to scrutiny committees, agendas and minutes
The Advisory Board has been recently constituted. Its members bring significant strength from experience of political, corporate and school leadership. However, it is too early yet to evaluate its effectiveness in advising, challenging and supporting the managing director for the impact of the consortium's business planning on raising standards and improving teaching and leadership. Its role in advising the Joint Committee will also require further development.	Constitution and terms of reference of executive board
Headteachers who attend the representative stakeholder group meetings give advice to inform decision making. The group is reviewing its remit to improve its effectiveness and ensure strongest possible links to school representation across the authorities.	Agendas and minutes of representative stakeholder group.
Members of the recently formed governors' strategy group are committed to working together to develop the high quality support and capacity building needed for governors across the region.Through their substantial experience of leadership in school governance the members of the group are well placed to participate in decision making about future direction.	Agendas and minutes of governors' strategy group
The headteachers' strategy group within the Central South Wales Challenge is not formally part of the governance structure. Nevertheless, it is playing a substantial role in leading the Challenge and the development of collaborative working between schools. Headteachers have seized the opportunity to achieve a step change in system-wide improvement and have been crucial to the progress achieved to date. Appropriately, the need for stronger accountability in the work of the school improvement groups is recognised by the strategy group. It will be important that this is shaped and brought to fruition with the full involvement of headteachers.	Agendas and minutes of strategy group
Performance management The service is committed to improving the performance of individuals and the service as a whole. In 2013-2014 the implementation of performance management arrangements varied. In 2014-2015 the arrangements have been strengthened through the establishment of an HR charter building on the RCT performance management processes. Action is now being taken to enhance professional development through collaborative learning and joint visits. Team meetings focus on the core aspects of the service's work and increasingly share practice and develop skills. The service is committed to obtaining feedback about performance in order to secure further improvement. In 2013-2014 feedback via a survey questionnaire from schools demonstrated high levels of satisfaction in some aspects but less so in others. The service has shown itself to be responsive to the need for improvement through restructuring and revisions to the Framework For Challenge And Support. . Meetings between the managing director, head of school improvement and challenge advisers in the summer provided the opportunity to establish clear expectations about the role and to inform development needs. Where there	Performance management policy and HR charter Performance management personal action plan National standards for challenge advisers. Standards for strategic advisers Protocol for accompanied visits Agendas for

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are concerns about individual performance these are discussed with the staff concerned and next steps agreed in line with procedure.	development meetings CSC survey December 2013
Headteachers' performance management is now well established. There is a strong link between headteachers' performance objectives and their school's key improvement priorities. There has been a much stronger emphasis in evaluating a school's performance on the impact of leadership and the provision of challenge and support to headteachers and schools' leaders has been prominent in a number of schools in categories C and D.	Walk though guidance for challenge advisers
Roles and responsibilities within the consortium Roles and responsibilities of staff within the challenge adviser, strategic adviser and business and administration teams are clear in job descriptions and in practice. These have been revised during 2013-2014 in line with the restructuring of the organisation and the key adviser roles are also set out in the Framework For Challenge and Support.	Service structure diagram Job descriptions
The restructuring of the service from two separate elements to one school improvement service is strengthening the communication and collaboration. The reduced requirement to generate income has brought greater focus to the need to demonstrate impact on outcomes in those schools that receive additional support.	
Staffing There are sufficient members of staff to challenge and support schools in their work to raise standards and to contribute to creating the conditions that will sustain improvement through sector-led school-to-school support. Despite the reduction in overall posts in the challenge adviser team capacity is similar to that of the previous year with the removal of the requirement to lead strategy that was inherent in some roles in the previous year.	Challenge adviser list and profile Deployment to schools list
The Framework For Challenge And Support makes explicit the greater differentiation in how challenge advisers work with schools. As a result there is now greater clarity in how intervention in inverse proportion to a school's ability to improve by itself is carried out in practice. The team has been strengthened through the recruitment of more serving or recently retired effective headteachers who bring recent and relevant experience to the role which includes experience of leadership in the special schools sector and a greater preponderance of primary headteachers. Recruitment procedures are robust and always involve representation from serving headteachers in the region.	
The capacity for leadership within the region is also strengthened through the Central South Wales Challenge. Through the strategy group seventeen headteachers are taking a prominent role in determining future direction, in communicating objectives and activities to their peers, in fielding questions and in promoting involvement.	
At senior challenge adviser level temporary arrangements provide the opportunity to test the longer-term feasibility of a greater bringing together of the role with that of the local authority based head of service. The involvement of heads of service more prominently in strategic meetings is strengthening the decision-making process and communication. The approach is also providing the impetus to share effective practices and promote greater consistency.	
Through the senior strategic adviser there is also now a more strategic approach to the commissioning of support and	

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to the development of provision to meet identified needs. Good progress is being made in establishing improvement hubs and specialist centres that will enable effective schools within the region to make a more telling contribution to capacity building. Strategic advisers and their central teams have been retained to enable the organisation to address the national priorities effectively. Appropriately the main focus of the work involves supporting those schools where the need to improve is greatest. Capacity also exists to provide a core professional development programme for all schools and to commission additional provision on behalf of schools where they require this. **Safeguarding** The organisation has a sound safeguarding policy and procedures which has been informed by the All Wales guidelines. Staff are provided with level 1+ training which includes insight into the procedures for inspecting safeguarding in schools and the materials to support school self-evaluation in this area. Safeguarding was one of the challenge advisers' focuses during visits to schools in the summer term 2014. **Risk assessment** The organisation has a risk register which is increasingly developed and owned by senior staff, directors meetings and the Executive Board and enables the service to anticipate and mitigate their effect. Risk management records have been presented to joint committee meetings highlighting the major risks to service delivery, budget and impact and their mitigating impact. Risks in delivery and budget are identified through a performance dashboard which is developed through regular oversight with the managing director and the business manager. The budget is routinely monitored and risks presented fortnightly to the senior leadership team of the organisation.	Safeguarding policy; agenda for team meetings

3.3 Resource management and value for money	
Evaluation	**Evidence**
Management and support structures The service is appropriately and adequately staffed. Staff are well qualified in their particular areas of work. The service employs other professionals to complement existing skills to be in a position to respond effectively to internal and external demands. Good support is provided by a range of staff in administrative and technical roles covering financial matters, management of budgets, data and intelligence, communication (with schools and the wider community), the curriculum and management information systems.	Business Structure diagrams Audit of Financial Statements Report Document Reference: 547A2014
Financial and performance management arrangements are robust at corporate and directorate levels to ensure that resources are managed effectively. The Joint Committee exercises responsibility for budgetary effectiveness across the region well. Links are made between the deployment of resources against the priorities of the region. A balanced score card provides the means to effectively monitor progress of these priorities, but this is at an early stage of development.	CSC business plan and annexes Statement of Accounts 12/13 & 13/14

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RCT (as the host authority) carries out the consortium business in accordance with the law and proper standards through a suite of Financial and Contract Procedure rules, which apply to all members and officers. The CSC has suitable arrangements in place to secure effective auditing of accounts. Arrangements closely follow the Council's requirements. The Legal Agreements make appropriate and sound provision for financial management across the region. Section 151 officers from across the region have been closely involved in ensuring the agreement is fit for purpose and all local authorities discuss and agree the proportion of delegated and retained funds. External audit by Wales Audit Office for 2012/13 and 2013/4 found no concerns regarding the qualitative aspects of the accounting process and no material weakness in internal controls. This was further supported by internal audit where core financial services were judged to have no material weakness. Since (September) 2013 / 14 the consortium have been responsible for managing regional grants and have made significant progress since May 2014 to ensure consistency of approach to regional funding streams and compliance with terms and conditions. Strategic Advisers are now responsible for ensuring all commitments identified within the budget monitoring process are eligible and are aligned to the agreed operational plans.	Audit of Financial Statements Report (2013-14) RCT Financial Procedure Rules RCT Contract Procedure Rules
Management of funding The consortium is funded from contributions from the five authorities within the region as well as through Welsh Government grant. There are appropriate arrangements in place to ensure regular monitoring and reporting of expenditure against budget (revenue and grant funding monitored monthly through meetings with budget holders-standing item on the senior management team fortnightly meetings; termly reporting to directors and Joint Committee). The arrangements have been implemented properly taking account of the core funding at a level set by the Welsh Government through the National Model for School Improvement and involving a proportionate contribution from each of the local authorities using agreed indicator based assessments, published annually by the Welsh Government as part of the local government revenue settlement. In 2014 – 15 the total funding received by the organisation is £4.5m. The remaining funding comes from Welsh Government education grants, some of which are retained centrally to provide specific support in line with the requirements of the consortium, local authorities and schools. Priorities and resources for the consortium are established in line with national priorities as well as priorities across the region and are agreed with all five directors. The service recognises the importance of deploying resources to ensure spending is appropriate and within budget. Significant work has been undertaken this year to strengthen and improve the rigour with which budget monitoring is undertaken to mitigate risks and to fund priorities such as the seed funding to develop school to school working through the school improvement groups as well as other in year initiatives. The core budget reflects the key work of the service in three areas: school Improvement (64%), strategic support Team (9%), business support 28%, which includes conference centre management, challenge adviser administrative support and strategic team support. Funding at the core level is based on priorities (from across the region) as well as	Central South Consortium: Business Plan & Annexe (A, B & C) CSC 'Budget on a Page' Joint Committee & Directors Meeting Reports

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identified need and in line with the National Model for Regional Working.	
Management of grant streams The consortium operates a comprehensive budget prioritisation process, driven by the needs of the region and in line with the terms and conditions of WG grant funding. There is a strong commitment to delegating funding to schools (in line with expectations). 86% of SEG funding is delegated to schools, 100% of PDG and 30% WEG (with a further 20% retained to provide targeted schools to schools). Local authorities have retained reduced amounts in 14/15 for supporting looked after children in education, improving the achievement of free school meal children and for grant administration. The consortium has retained an amount to support the literacy and numeracy team, match funded by schools to fund intensive support. Monitoring of the grant spend is effective. Schools submit costed annual plans aligned to the school improvement plan for approval. Monitoring of retained spend forms the basis for highlight reports as well as the final evaluation reports to WG. Funding for the Foundation Phase Grant is used appropriately to provide Welsh Government mandatory training for all schools. Further work is required to deploy retained resources in Foundation Phase where the need is greatest. Total PDG amounts for 14/15 are £21.8m. Schools are reminded of the requirement to publish plans online and these are discussed with challenge advisers. The internal management dashboard monitors progress and is discussed fortnightly at the senior leadership team meeting. The consortium holds regular meetings with the relevant LA officers to discuss the grants monitoring process, helping to ensure that everyone knows their respective roles and also to share good practice.	Grant Terms & Conditions Operational Plans (SEG, WEG, Foundation Phase) Highlight reports (SEG, WEG, FP) Evaluation reports Joint Committee grant reports Minutes of LA grants officer meetings 'Grants Handbook' Regional Finance Officers meetings
Control of funding streams. Local authorities continue to fund inclusion services as the transfer of these services are not part of the national model. Individual authorities work closely with the consortium continue to align functions as far as possible. The consortium is developing a model for the transfer of additional services (HR Support, 14-19 & Governor Support). Local authorities have retained this funding for 2014-15 and are working collaboratively with the consortium to review and evaluate current provision and determine longer term solutions to best suit the needs of the region.	
Targeted Funding Streams **Welsh in Education Grant** Deployment of grant funding was reviewed for 2014-15 to ensure effective targeting of schools with the greatest need to improve. Criteria are used to determine the level of targeted support both Welsh and English-medium schools.	Strategies and operational plans Intensive literacy support for 10 Cardiff schools; Success For All evaluation; targeted support 6 Vale schools; Tactical Teaching;

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Schools Effectiveness Grant Targeted support for literacy and numeracy is available to red and amber schools. Case studies demonstrate impact in most instances. **Foundation Phase Grant** 95% of the grant is delegated to authorities and schools funding classroom assistants. Funding for the Foundation Phase Grant is used appropriately to provide Welsh Government mandatory training for all schools. Further work is required to deploy retained resources where the need is greatest. **Funding for School Improvement Services (Challenge Advisers)** There is now a stronger emphasis on targeting resources of challenge advisers in line with the principle of intervention in inverse proportion to a school's ability to improve. Effective use has been made of the budget to recruit serving and recently retired head teachers bringing additional recent and relevant experience into the service.	support for numeracy planning– year 2 and 6 teachers in Vale of Glamorgan; NIPpers –primary numeracy intervention in 7 Merthyr schools; secondary mathematics- bespoke for individual schools
3.4.2 How the consortium provide value for money	
Value for Money Improvements are evident for all outcomes relating to pupils achievement over the last three years. The data suggest that improvement is now more sustained and was more significant in 2013-2014 at all key stages including key stage 4 and in each local authority. As a result gaps with the Welsh averages have narrowed. There has also been a narrowing of the gap in performance between pupils eligible for FSM compared to those pupils not eligible in the Foundation Phase, key stage 2 and key stage 3 but not yet at key stage 4 against the level 2+ indicator. The deployment of resources within each local authority and through the regional collaboration have led to a strong and sustained impact in improving attendance. This has now occurred for three years in succession. The region's performance and that of each local authority now compare well with the position nationally in both primary and secondary schools. Despite these improvements in achievement and attendance there is still a need to improve outcomes further in order to reach the region's ambitions for every pupil. **Efficiency Savings** Over the past year a number of services within the CSC have been restructured to realise efficiency savings and improved quality of service and increased revenue resource for the development of a school-led system. Administrative teams and senior management teams have been restructured and are working more efficiently. The service examines carefully current spending to assess whether it is operating at maximum efficiency. Through the value for money team and a quick response to examination of expenditure efficiency savings are being made in	View of performance in 2013-2014 Value for Money – initial findings report Data spreadsheets Organisation structures Value for money report Final SEG monitoring and evaluation report 2013/14 Ty Dysgu Print Environment: Recommendations Report Ty Dysgu – Summary Position Report (Building & Conference Centre)

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the following areas: operation of the conference centre and use of the building; rationalisation of ICT support services; rationalisation and centralisation of print support services; economies of scale through support provided by centralised teams; provision of courses and events in collaboration with others to share costs; development of school to school support and SIGs to share knowledge and effective practice around the system. Long term proposals for the organisation are being reviewed with a view to further rationalisation.	
Key Question 3: Areas For Improvement • Embed the operation of the governance and accountability framework. • Improve the reporting arrangements to the scrutiny committees in each local authority so that they are more consistent. • Continue to develop understanding of the relative roles and responsibilities of schools, the local authorities and the consortium and other partners through the Central South Wales Challenge. • Strengthen the link between self-evaluation and business planning. • Provide robust evidence to demonstrate that the deployment of resources represents value for money.	

Summary Of Key Points from Central South Consortium'S Self Evaluation

November 2014

Standards – Strengths

Strengths	Evidenced by
Performance at every key stage has improved against the national average. Improvement is better than that for Wales in every key stage.	Performance data - key stage outcomes
Performance has particularly improved at the level above the expected level at every key stage. The rate of improvement at outcome 6 in the Foundation phase, level 5 at key stage 2 and level 6+ at key stage 3 is greater than that at the expected outcome/ level.	
Performance has improved particularly at GCSE against the L2+ threshold.	
2014 results saw significant reduction in the number of schools below 40% and 50% L2+ but still a need to reduce this further – reduce to zero below 40% by 2016	
Whilst maths improved least of all subjects at KS2 and 3, improvement in maths at L2 at key stage 4 in particular was greater than that nationally. English at L2 was also significantly higher than national levels of improvement.	
Attendance rates have improved consistently across the region in both primary and secondary schools and are in line with the national average. Permanent exclusion has fallen as has fixed term exclusion, although there are variations between authorities and a need to reduce further	WG attendance and exclusions statistical bulletins
At Foundation Phase, key stages 2 and 3 e-FSM pupils' performance has improved at a greater rate than non e-FSM pupils closing the gap between children claiming FSM and their peers. At KS4 at level 2+ the gap narrowed in Cardiff and slightly in RCT and Merthyr.	
The proportion of entries reaching grades A*/ A at GCSE across the region as a whole is just above the Welsh average (20%/19.4%) but needs further improvement.	

Standards - areas for improvement (1)

Area for improvement	What we will do
Performance of pupils vulnerable to underachievement – e-FSM pupils, looked after children, pupils with English as an additional language and pupils with special educational needs	Improve focus on pupils claiming fsm and other pupils vulnerable to underachievement in challenge framework, and in development and use of evidence based interventions
The proportion of entries reaching the higher grades A* /A at GCSE and at A level to reduce variations.	Challenge school's performance and strategies in these areas
The performance of boys in language and both boys and girls in mathematics.	Review interventions and focus of literacy team and ensure is part of Qualified for Life programme
Improvement is less marked in the foundation phase than in other key stages	Review with the FP team; ensure mandatory and bespoke programmes respond to need
Improvement needed in Welsh outcomes in particularly at KS4 in Welsh-medium schools	Continue to develop sector led system and review the role of the WEG team.
Not yet enough schools in the top quartile at all key stages	Deliver sharper framework and roll out CSW challenge with focus on underachievement
The number of secondary schools where fewer than 40% of pupils achieve the level 2+ and the gap between L2 and L2+ is too wide (54 schools where it is more than 10%).	Continue to give these indicators a high profile in challenge and support
The variations in performance between schools, including schools where performance is 'coasting', and the number of schools requiring follow-up.	Embed challenge and categorisation framework effectively; work closely with local authorities to challenge expectations and use statutory powers where relevant.
The level 1 threshold in all local authorities and especially in the Vale and Bridgend.	Improve the understanding and focus on L1 through 14-19 function; challenge expectations
Attendance, particularly for children who are vulnerable to underachievement and the continuing need to reduce exclusions further.	Continue to deliver the regional attendance strategy; improve data collection about exclusion in year

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School improvement Service: Strengths

Strengths	Evidenced by
The development of the CSW Challenge work has developed with pace and vigour and has engaged schools well, but there is a continued need for consistency and focus on impact	SIG engagement, self evaluation planning.
There is better partnership working between LAs and the consortium in the leadership of the challenge advisers' work	Annexes, progress reviews and feedback from schools
The framework for challenge and support provides clearer expectations about key school improvement processes, greater differentiation in targeting support and challenge and improvements in schools categorised as C or D.	Estyn monitoring visits Analysis of C and D performance
There is a generally good correlation between inspection judgements and the categorisation but a need to improve this further	Analysis of Estyn judgements against categorisation
The challenge framework is sharper on building capacity for self evaluation and improvement planning within schools	Feedback and survey findings
Brokerage of support in particular literacy and numeracy support and leadership reviews leading to action is improving across the region	Case studies
Communication is improved between LAs, consortia and schools	Feedback from schools
There is a commitment to improved consistency in intervention across the region	Directors meetings and minutes

School improvement Service: Areas for improvement

Area for improvement	What we will do
The need for greater consistency in arrangements for challenging and supporting school self-evaluation and improvement planning across the region	Implement the revised Framework For Challenge And Support to strengthen further the arrangements for monitoring and reporting schools' progress across the five authorities.
Strengthening quality assurance and the consistency of professional practice to improve the impact of the challenge framework	Continue work to develop consistency, quality and robustness in how challenge advisers through oversight, professional development and performance management.
Need to develop the role of governors with more bespoke support, capacity building and good quality consistent relevant training	Design and deliver consistency and quality in governor support services from April and deliver governor training sessions ahead of April.
Continue to build the capacity of the system as a whole to be self-improving giving particular priority to the development of capacity in the system to work across schools and the development of leadership capacity.	Deliver the CSW Challenge focusing particularly on the establishment and development of the hubs , developing leadership capacity and building capacity in schools to develop from good to great.
Improve further efficient and systematic use of data across the region	Design and agree a specification for the new expanded data team in line with authorities and schools' data demands including a review of portal
A need to develop better collaboration with wider school improvement services in LAs especially when working with schools causing concern	Improve mechanisms that support collaboration between particularly challenge advisers and officers in those services that have remained with the local authority.
Reliability of teacher assessment (too inconsistent and not robust enough)	Design and deliver a more robust process for moderation across the region involving clusters working across authorities

Leadership and Management: Strengths

Strengths	Evidenced by
Ambitious vision and strategy for a sector-led self-improving system	CSW plan
Developing collective system leadership by heads and local authorities working in partnership together	CSW challenge leadership, engagement by heads and business case
Clear line of sight between vision, principle and key documents	CSW plan, business plan, challenge framework
Legal agreement, accountability and governance model in place – needs testing in practice	Legal agreement and accountability processes in place
Appropriate and resourced staffing models	Balanced budget and staffing structure
Improving models for quality assurance and consistency of practice	HR Charter in place, performance management models in place
Strong budgetary management and good audit outcomes	Budgetary control reports and audit outcomes

Leadership and Management: Areas for Improvement

Area for improvement	What we will do
The operation of the governance and accountability framework need to be embedded,	Monitor the reporting of performance tightly and operation of the accountability framework
Improve the reporting arrangements to the scrutiny committees in each local authority to bring consistency	Report progress to each scrutiny committee
Continue to develop understanding of the relative roles and responsibilities of schools, the local authorities and the consortium and other partners through the Central South Wales Challenge.	Continue to use the governance structure to develop improved communications and partnership working
Engagement with wider stakeholders more effectively – business, community and cultural/sporting leaders as well as parents and pupils	Launch CSW pledge work and engage with community and business leaders
Delivery and implementation of the HR Charter and PM/CPD systems with rigour and consistency to achieve ambition of being a high performing organisation	Monitor implementation of the HR Charter and PM systems
Strengthening the link between self-evaluation and business planning	Feed SER headlines into BP framework for 15/16
Improve risk management processes across the organisation	Present risk register to all steering groups and monitor regularly
Intensifying efforts to provide robust evidence to demonstrate that resources represent value for money	Provide robust evidence of impact and efficiency

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