

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
MUNICIPAL YEAR 2015-2016

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

21ST SEPTEMBER 2015

Agenda Item No. 3
Central South Consortium and its contribution to raising standards in Rhondda Cynon Taf schools

**REPORT OF:
TEMPORARY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING**

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the contribution of the Central South Consortium (CSC) to raising standards in schools across Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Note the content of this report.
- 2.2 Scrutinise and comment on the information provided.
- 2.3 Consider whether they wish to scrutinise in greater depth any matters contained in the report.

3. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- 3.1 The CSC provides a School Improvement Service to 400 schools across five local authorities: Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, RCT, Vale of Glamorgan.
- 3.2 This region contains a third of the most disadvantaged communities in Wales. The most of any of the other three regions.
- 3.3 Since its beginning in 2012 the CSC has undergone a period of rapid changes. 2013/14 saw a further significant restructure which ended the LINKS traded service, the appointment of a new literacy and numeracy team as well as new lead roles for leadership and teaching and learning. This included reviewing the appointment of all challenge advisers which led to a 40% turnover and a third of challenge advisers are now recently or practising headteachers.
- 3.4 CSC covers 406 schools, 30% of Wales' children from across five authorities. Since 2012 standards have improved across the region at every key stage. In 2015 the region

overtook the national average at foundation phase, key stage two and key stage four but remains 0.3 percentage points below at key stage 3. Overall authorities in the region have demonstrated significantly faster improvement than the national average from a low base. There has also been significant improvement in levels of attendance in primary and secondary schools.

- 3.5 The 14/15 Business Plan (Appendix 1) sets out the strategic ambition to develop and support a self improving school system which is enquiry led and built around effective self evaluation and improvement planning. This is called the **Central South Wales Challenge** and the two year brochure is attached at Appendix 2.
- 3.6 The Business Plan also establishes three priority areas for the Consortium: Improving Teaching, Improving Leadership and Improving Partnership. It sets stretching and ambitious targets based on those targets agreed in each authority and reflecting school target setting. Each LA has agreed a local authority annex which includes targets for the local authority in line with the targets set in the Education and Lifelong Learning Strategic Plan.

4 **CENTRAL SOUTH WALES CHALLENGE**

- 4.1 The Central South Wales Challenge has six areas of work on the six indicators of an effective School Improvement System. The table below sets out the current position against each and how we will measure impact.

Indicator	Impact measured by
A focus on capacity and leadership of teaching and learning through the development of school improvement hubs resourced in September to provide leadership and teaching and learning support across the region.	Clear criteria for hub schools. Numbers of teachers completing Outstanding Teacher Programme (OTP)/Improving Teacher Programme (ITP), teaching and learning/leadership indicator in Estyn reports and externally accredited.
School Improvement Groups (SIGs) set up in April which includes all schools in the region within 39 groups. They each deliberately include a range of schools with differing levels of capacity, need and from different parts of the region.	SIG plans received with impact measures, challenge framework monitoring impact on schools, Challenge Advisers badged against SIGs, external evaluation commissioned.
96 schools engaged in Pathfinder partnerships established in February 2014 across the region on a school to school basis. Funding provided against plan.	Initial evaluation in September 2014 reported significant impact on school capacity to improve. September 2015 second evaluation.
Family/community: Closing the gap case study schools identified and built on/invested in to share expertise. Pledge developed to identify and share cultural capital access to all children in the region.	Case study schools identified from data and reviewed by IPSOS Mori. A South Wales Valleys community project established in September 2015 to focus on achievement of Free School Meal (FSM) children. This project will focus on schools in RCT and Merthyr, as well as Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen.

Indicator	Impact measured by
Leadership: Peer reviews offered to all green schools from September 2015. 60 schools involved in second phase of pilot.	External training provided to peer reviewers who must meet criteria and Estyn involved in training.
LA/Consortium role: Improved Challenge framework for CA role focused on building capacity for self evaluation in schools, improved engagement with governors and increasingly using school led support models (as above). Sharper more consistent LA function including consistent intervention model.	Improved QA of challenge adviser function and challenge framework expectations. Focus on Estyn monitoring of challenge and support.

- 4.2 Effective school self evaluation and improvement planning is at the centre of the vision of a self improving school system. Since 2013 the Challenge framework for challenge advisers has evolved and shifts the responsibility for school self evaluation to the head and governors, supported or challenged by the challenge adviser. This work has been recognised and welcomed by schools across the region. This approach has been driven in particular by colleagues in RCTCBC. The framework is sharper and clearer about timescales and measures of progress/intervention practice. There is already evidence that it is driving a better sense of consistency of practice across the region.

5 **HOW IS THE CONSORTIUM SUPPORTING RHONDDA CYNON TAF SCHOOLS?**

- 5.1 RCT local authority spend £1,215,716 core funding on the Consortium function. The consortium provides twenty two full or part-time challenge advisers working with RCT schools plus support for School Challenge Cymru (SCC) advisers and two part-time senior challenge advisers' posts – primary and secondary. In addition to the consortium leadership team, data team and business support and core costs, all schools in the region have access to core funded support from strategic advisers for literacy and numeracy (primary and secondary), leadership, teaching, ICT, Foundation Phase Welsh first and second language. The Central South Wales (CSW) strategy group is funded from core funding - the CSW strategy group includes three RCT headteachers.
- 5.2 Retained Early Intervention Grants (EIG) partly funds literacy and numeracy support. This includes 10 primary schools in receipt of intensive literacy support and 20 intensive numeracy support, in addition 23 primary schools had support for Foundation Phase. Seven secondary schools receive secondary numeracy/maths and 12 for literacy/English.
- 5.3 During 2014/15 56 delegates from 21 schools engaged in the Outstanding Teacher Programme. 22 teachers from 12 schools engaging in the Improving Teacher Programme.
- 5.4 There are currently two hub schools in RCT (Cardinal Newman and Y Pant) offering provision as part of the hub programme. Treorchy Comprehensive School is an Olevi Hub which offers a programme for improving teacher performance. Craig yr Hesg/Cefn Primary are joining the hubs programme in September 2015 with a focus on teaching and learning and we are exploring a number of schools to develop as part of a Welsh

Government funded 'closing the gap in the South Wales Valleys' joint practice development work. Dolau Primary, Brynnau Primary and the primary department in Ysgol Llanhari are, from September 2015, Foundation Phase Alliance schools delivering support for Foundation Phase across the region. All schools in RCT have been involved in School Improvement Group (SIG) working and 18 schools from RCT have been linked with other schools through the pathfinder programme. In addition, 140 teachers from 21 schools in RCT engaged in the Hubs/Specialist Centres Programmes. The Consortium will provide a report on impact across SIGs and pathfinders to the authority within its next progress reporting round.

- 5.5 There are four School Challenge Cymru advisers in RCT and, in addition to the strategic team, Physical Literacy in Schools, Hwb+ and Qualified for Life teams are working with RCT schools as part of their grant funded operation.

6 WHAT IS WORKING WELL IN SCHOOLS IN RCT?

- 6.1 Outcomes are showing a significant accelerated improvement across all key stages in every authority and that is reflected in RCT schools. Appendix 3 includes all authorities' performance at all stages up to key stage 4. Further details will follow from the authority during a later Scrutiny meeting but headlines are:

6.1.1 At foundation phase, in RCT the percentage of pupils aged between 5 and 7 years old who achieved the expected outcome in language, mathematics and PSE (Outcome 5 or above) has increased 4.5 percentage points from 81.8 to 86.3%, compared to a regional rise of 3.5% points and a national increase of 1.4% points;

6.1.2 At key stage 2, in RCT the number of pupils aged between 7 and 11 years old, achieving at least their expected level in English, mathematics and science (level 4 or above) has increased by 3.5 percentage points from 84.3% to 87.8% in 2015, compared to a regional rise of 2 points and a national increase of 1.6 percentage points;

6.1.3 At key stage 3, in RCT the proportion of pupils aged between 11 and 14 years olds achieving at least the expected level in English, mathematics and science (level 5 or above) have seen a rise of 3.2 percentage points from 78.4% to 81.6%, compared to a regional improvement of 3.3 points and a national average of 2.9 percentage points;

6.1.4 At key stage four the percentage of pupils achieving 5 GCSE passes at grades A*-C including English/Welsh and mathematics (known as the Level 2+ measure) improved in RCT in 2014 by 4.1 percentage points. In 2015 provisional results show outcomes improved again at this indicator by another 3.4 percentage points taking the overall Level 2+ figure in RCT to 53.8%. This compares to a regional improvement over two years of 8.5%. We don't yet know the average Level 2+ indicator;

- 6.2 The Joint Wales Audit Office and Estyn remit review of Consortia support the authorities' view that:

6.2.1 Data is used well as the key driver to categorise schools;

6.2.2 Other information is used well to determine the capacity for improvement;

- 6.2.3 There are clear lines of accountability;
- 6.2.4 Activities focus on improving outcomes;
- 6.2.5 Resources are used effectively and efficiently to provide support for schools in inverse proportion to success;
- 6.2.6 Leadership capacity for improvement is supported and developed well during Partnership Reviews;
- 6.2.7 Case conferences are used to drive improvement, to monitor progress and to hold schools and governors to account.

6.3 Progress of the red and amber support schools has been rapid. The authority's report on categorisation notes the progress of schools in different categories and the areas for further improvement. Estyn inspections outcomes have generally been positive during the academic year 2014/15. In 2014-15 Coedpenmaen Primary School was judged to no longer require Significant Improvement; Cilfynydd Primary School, Cwmbach Primary School, Darrenlas Primary School, Miskin Primary School, Ysgol yr Eos Primary School, YGG Ynyswen, YGG Bronllwyn and Ty Gwyn PRU moved out of Estyn Monitoring. Llanharan Primary School, Tonypany Primary School and Porth Junior School moved out of LA monitoring. During the year, schools have moved levels of support with seven schools moving from amber to yellow, however three schools have also moved to higher levels of support – from amber to red; one due to inspection outcome, the others due to lack of progress.

7 ACCOUNTABILITY AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

- 7.1 The governance and accountability structure required by the Welsh Government in the national model is in place in the region. The Governance Framework is illustrated in the Business Plan. There is a clear reporting process and improvement cycle which reports to each authority every term. In addition, the Consortium is scrutinised in every local authority inspection and will be formerly inspected by Estyn and the Welsh Audit Office in the Spring of 2016.
- 7.2 Steps have been taken to improve quality assurance and performance management processes as follows:
 - 7.2.1 A performance management framework is in place with expectations about objective setting and performance monitoring. Senior challenge advisers are clear about their line management expectations and are undertaking joint visits with challenge advisers and we will review each year;
 - 7.2.2 Professional development is a core part of our programme including opportunities for reflection about practice and coaching as well as more formal training sessions;
 - 7.2.3 An explicit quality assurance model is in place including regular review of inspection outcomes, progress against the framework, progress of red/amber schools as well as budget monitoring. In September 2015 this will be sharpened still further with value for money reviews of areas of risk and spot checking of

reporting and line management compliance and quality. In addition a report will be published each year on the progress and impact of SIGs and pathfinders;

- 7.2.4 A report is provided to each local authority each term on the implementation of the framework, inspection outcomes against categorisation and progress of red/amber schools;
- 7.2.5 Two independent evaluations of progress have been commissioned from the National Foundation for Education Research (NFER) and Cardiff University of the implementation of our Central South Wales Challenge Framework and a further survey of the use of Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) in Central South schools to be led by IPSOS Mori.

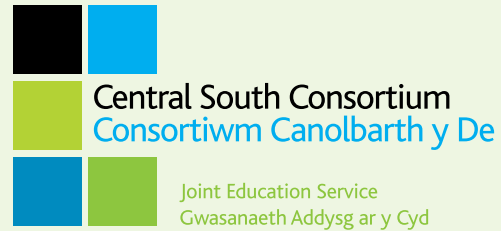
8. **AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

- 8.1 There are a number of issues which we need to make faster progress on:
 - 8.1.1 Sharper **pace and urgency within RCT particularly within primary schools but also targeted secondary schools to focus on the achievement of children claiming free school meals** in particular across the region, so that they achieve accelerated improvement against their peers;
 - 8.1.2 **Evidencing impact, accelerating and deepening joint practice development** work across interventions and SIGs and pathfinders in particular, with sharp succinct evaluative reporting. This needs to continue to draw on evidence through the development of evaluative practice training working with Cardiff University and joint practice development tools;
 - 8.1.3 Continuing to recruit and **develop high quality challenge advisers**. Some churn in challenge advisers is inevitable as we move to a model which draws more on experienced seconded heads, but we can keep a focus on fair allocation of workload, rigorous professional development and a focus on reflection on practice and strong performance management; a development programme is in place for all challenge advisers clearly linked to their professional standards. This includes specific training on developing coaching skills;
 - 8.1.4 **Analysis of Key stage 2 and 3 tests has indicated wide variation of teacher assessment** and moderation. The national approach to verification of teacher assessment has been shown to be rigorous and impactful but sampled only 10% of schools. This will be extended and the process shared much earlier this year; the lead for the verification process within CSC is also the Head of Performance for Primary School in RCT;
 - 8.1.5 Following on from the aspiring leadership programme which has been run successfully in RCT over the past three years and to improve the quality of leaders across the region, the **development of an executive leadership programme** across the region for both primary and secondary headteachers to meet the challenges of the 21st Century Schools agenda. There are three primary headteachers, two secondary headteachers and one special school headteacher from RCT currently undertaking these programmes;

- 8.1.6 **Improved use of information systems** across the region through the development of the Portal as a single point of information for schools, authorities and consortium colleagues across the region. The work in this area compliments the work being undertaken by the Data and Information teams within RCT to improve the use of Capita One across all service areas.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1 In RCT, as Scrutiny reports have shown, standards in 2015 continue to improve and the rate of progress is good across all performance indicators. In relation to FSM rankings across Wales (RCT is currently 21/22), RCT is ranked higher than might be expected in most areas.
- 9.2 Challenge advisers have a relevant background and level of experience and are providing good quality input working well with the authority in partnership to provide effective monitoring, challenge, support and intervention where needed. Challenge advisers also are able to commission bespoke support and intervention from the wider support teams.
- 9.3 The consortium processes provide a relentless focus on raising standards through improving leadership, teaching and learning and there is appropriate use of information, facilitation of partnership working, effective capacity building and clear lines of accountability.



Central South Consortium Business Plan

2015/16

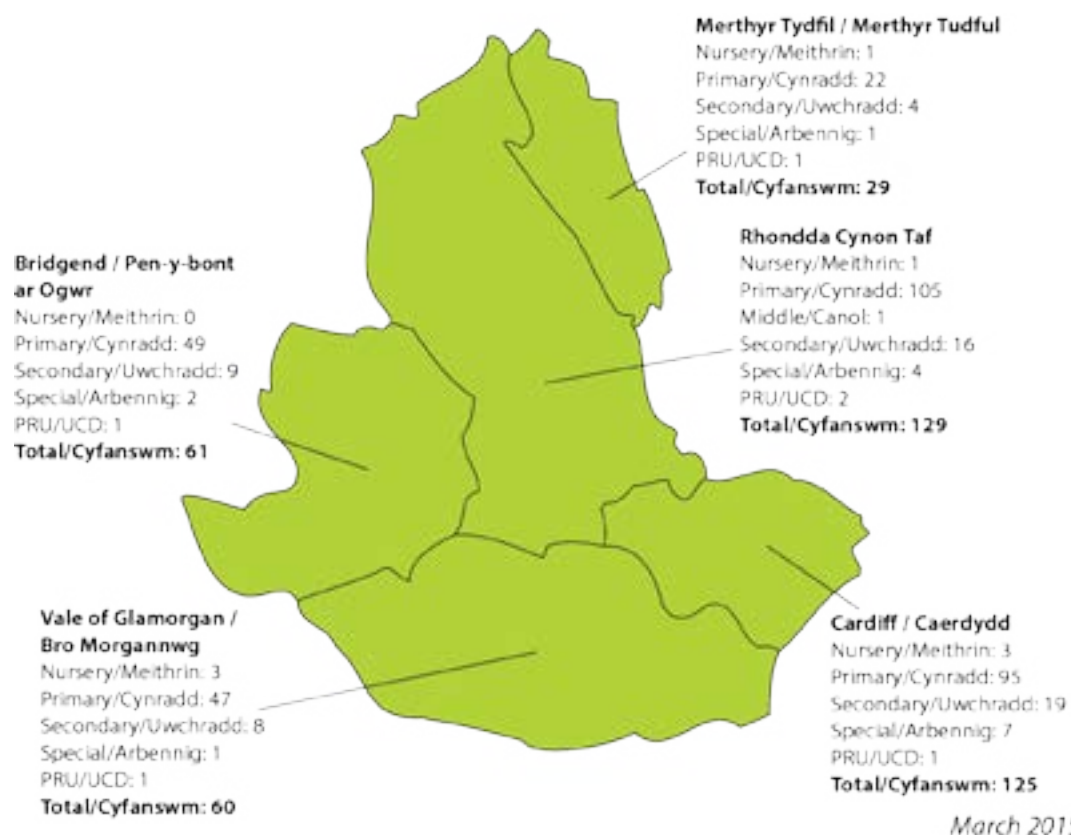


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The Central South Consortium

A self-improving school system: Working together to give all children and young people the best start in life.



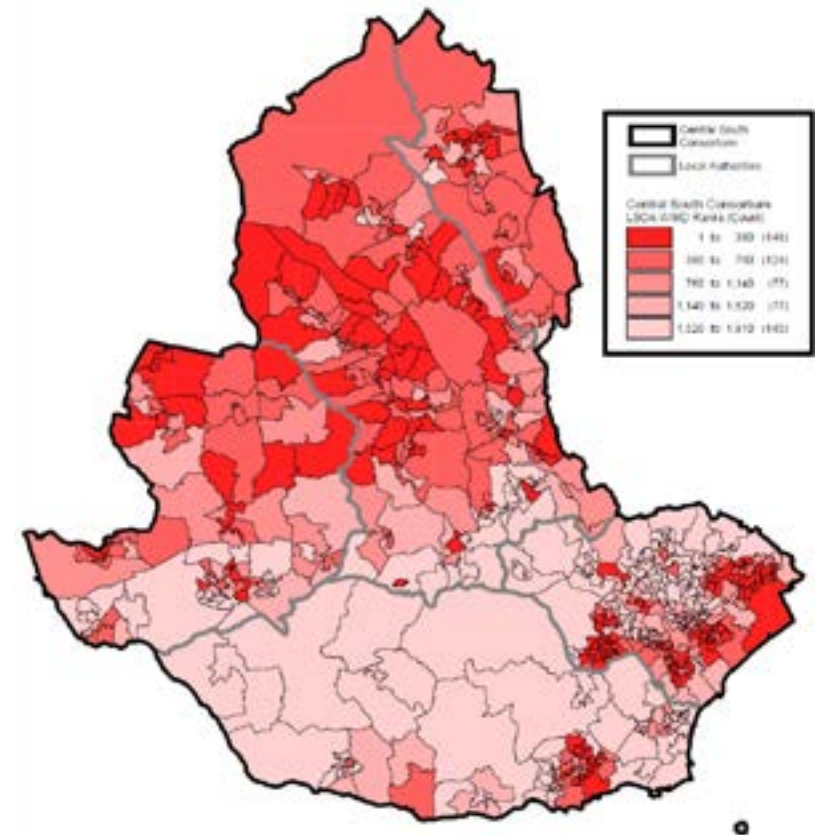
Improvement in schools in the Central South Consortium can drive improvement nationally

The 400 schools across the Central South region are the key to the future of educational improvement in Wales. This is the most populous region in Wales, contains the capital city and the economic, financial, creative and media industries of the city region. It also represents wide diversity from the proud historical valleys to the affluent rural coastal communities.

This region contains a third of the most disadvantaged communities in Wales, the most of any region in Wales. It is increasingly diverse with more ethnic minorities and communities without English or Welsh as a first language. This is why if we are to break the link between deprivation and low attainment across Wales we must demonstrate how this can be done in the Central South region. It is why we are determined to demonstrate progress in improving the outcomes of the most vulnerable fastest.

How well children and young people, particularly the most vulnerable, achieve in education and training in this region significantly influences the reality and perception of education in Wales. The role of schools in driving social cohesion and economic prosperity in this region is crucial to the health and wellbeing of Wales as a whole.

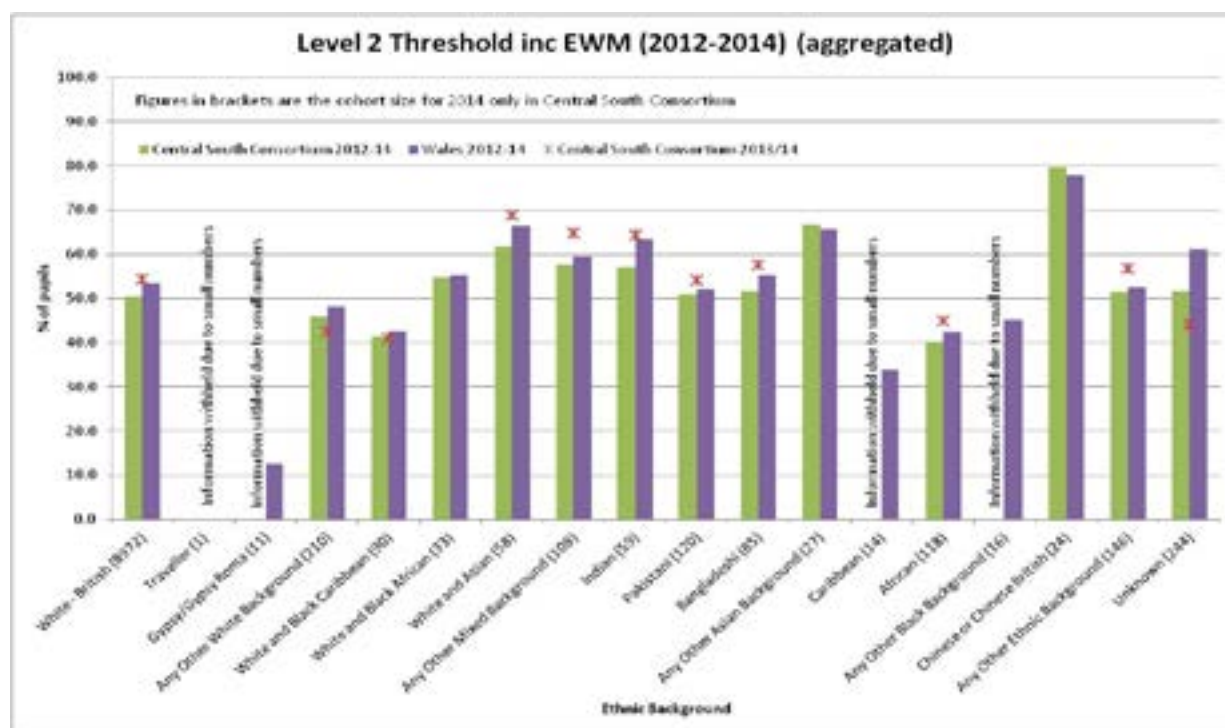
Central South Consortium Lower Super Output Area by Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation Rank



The population across Central South Wales is increasingly diverse and includes some of the most disadvantaged communities in Wales

We are committed to developing a world class system of education in the Central South Consortium (CSC). We want to raise the aspirations of all young people and their parents and give them confidence in education. And we want the region to be known as the place to teach and to lead schools in Wales where professional development is central to all that we do. We want to work across the communities and authorities of the region to give all children and young people the opportunities to match their talents and enable them to succeed in further learning and in life.

The outcomes of children from ethnic minority communities vary considerably

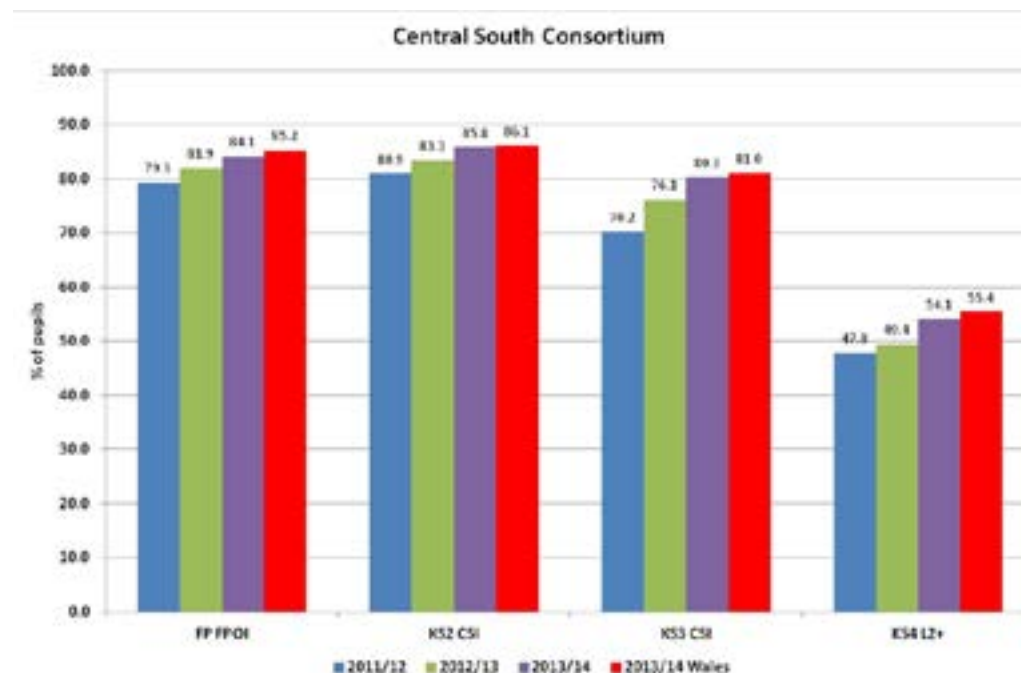


Schools in the Central South Consortium are driving improvement across Wales

We are already seeing excellent progress as a result of the hard work of schools supported by authorities across the region. It has been the improvement in schools in the Central South Consortium which has driven improvement nationally. In 2014 in particular:

- In the Foundation phase, outcomes improved by 3.2% against a national improvement of 2.2%;
- At Key Stage Two outcomes improved by 2% points against 1.8% points nationally;
- At Key Stage Three results rose by 4.2% points against 4% points nationally; and
- At Key Stage Four all authorities improved L2+ by more than the national average leading to a regional average of 4.6% points against a national improvement of 2.2% points.
- In mathematics in particular L2 improvement at KS4 was 4.4% points on average against a national average improvement of 1.4% points.
- Attendance also improved in both phases taking the region to above the national average at secondary level with a 2.5% point improvement in some authorities.
- Some schools in the region are excellent and many have excellent practice. We want to build on what the best schools do and are confident the rest can do at least as well.

Summary tables of the performance data for the Region can be found in Appendix 1 available on the Central South Consortium website (www.cscjes.org.uk).





The Central South Wales Challenge: A self-improving school system

In January 2014 we launched the Central South Wales Challenge. This strategy is led by head teachers, includes all schools across the region and draws on international research. It is based on six underlying principles which are commonly found in successful school systems:

- Schools are communities where collaborative inquiry is used to foster improvements in practice.
- Groupings of schools engage in joint practice development.
- Where necessary, more intensive partnerships are organised to provide support for schools facing difficulties.
- Families and community organisations support the work of schools.
- Coordination of the system is provided by school leaders.
- Local authorities work together to act as the conscience of the system.

A simple ambitious strategy: where schools care about the improvement of all

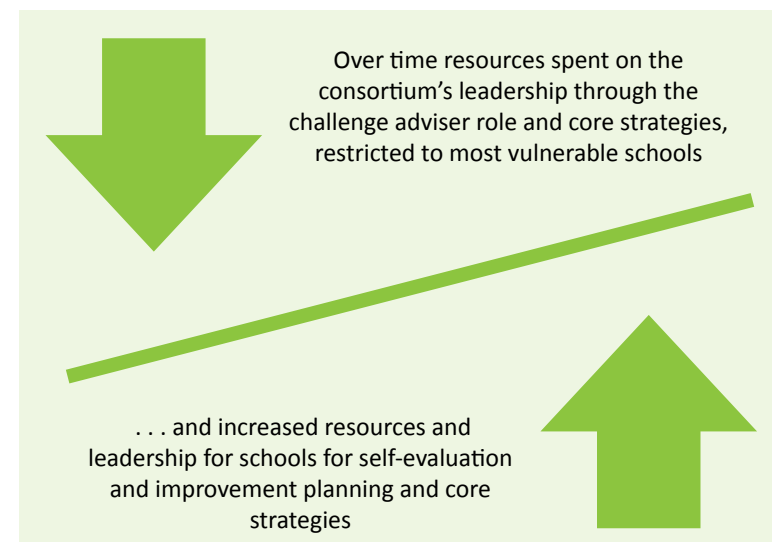
Our strategy is about all schools acting collaboratively to improve all schools in the region. It is simple and ambitious.

We are committed to a strong sense of common moral purpose. We want to develop a system where schools care about improvement for all as much as for their own school.

We want to shift school improvement from a model that is centrally driven to a model that is by schools for schools, where the reliance on wider external bodies is lessened as capacity for collective improvement is strengthened across the system.

Since we launched our strategy we have:

- launched the 43 School Improvement groups (SIGs) in which every school is involved. The SIGs include schools who have previously had little in common but have worked well to identify and build joint practice development across the region. They are supported by Cardiff University;
- launched two rounds of pathfinders including over 60 schools. These are school to school partnerships funded with agreed outcomes and inputs;
- piloted a 'peer review' leadership model for wider roll out across all schools;
- launched the 'hubs' programme whereby schools provide high quality programmes of support for others, quality assured and accredited.



Shifting away from a dependency model to 'by schools for schools'

We want to shift the culture of school improvement from dependency on central support to a model which is led by schools for schools. This will take time and energy, but high performing school systems internationally have shown that this is the right strategy and will lead to the greatest sustainable long term improvement.

Our ambitious plans to build on our approach so far in 2015 and 2016 are set out in this business plan.



Meeting the Central South Wales Challenge

The self improving system will take time to mature and develop. Looking ahead, success for the Central South Wales Challenge will mean:

- The schools in this region will be the best in Wales. All schools will be committed to the improvement of all schools across the region and every school will be recognised with leadership and teaching at least good and striving to be outstanding.
- Schools in the region will be known for their commitment to professional development and to professional learning communities where innovation is fed by joint practice development in partnership with other schools. Improvement capacity for schools is developed and provided by schools in the region in a dynamic way, responsive to the needs of children and young people in the region.
- Challenge advisers in the consortium identify and evaluate best practice and monitor impact, intervening rapidly on behalf of the authorities where necessary. The consortium works well in partnership with authorities to provide seamless improvement support to schools. Intelligent accountability is in place, and effective support and challenge brokered by the consortium working with local authorities.

The Central South Consortium's Business Plan 2015/16

This business plan sets out how we will build on progress so far. It sets out our approach, our long term vision, how we will measure progress and what we plan to do through the year. It includes how we intend to use our resources and our governance model.

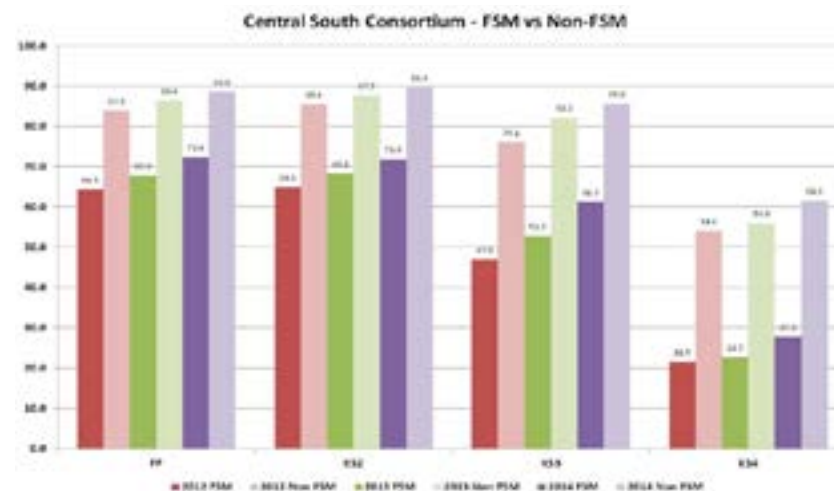
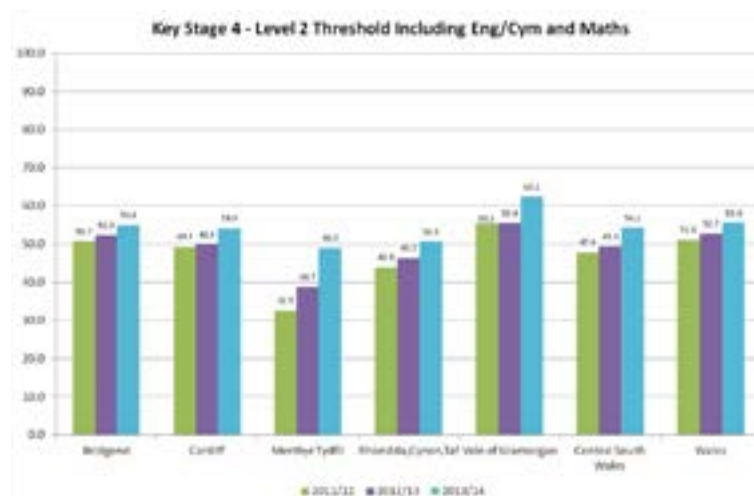
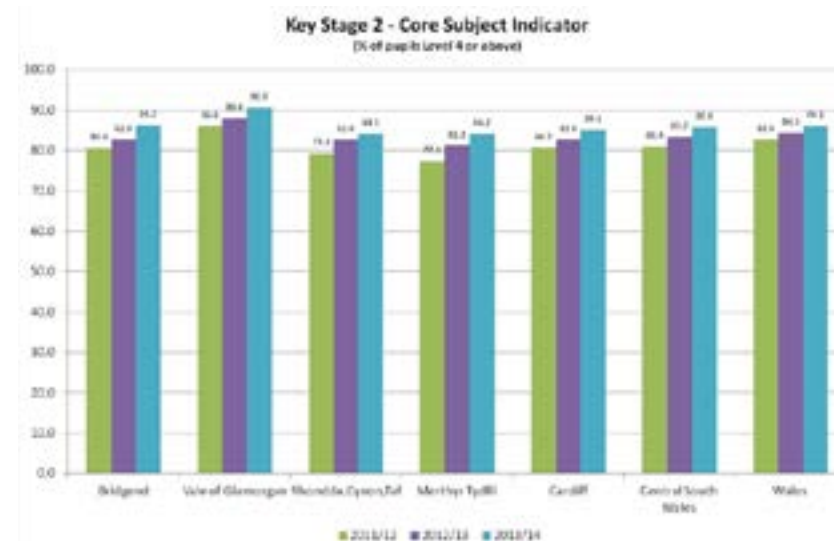
Our aims for the 15/16 year and beyond are:

- **To improve standards for all children and young people in all schools**, and for the most vulnerable fastest, so that every child achieves their full potential and every school is a good school with at least good leadership of teaching and learning.
- **To improve capacity in the school system**, within and across schools so that schools increasingly are professional learning communities and work together to support each other with a commitment to developing staff and evaluating and learning from each other.
- **To develop robust and enabling partnership working** with local authorities and the consortium which get behind the efforts of schools to improve, provide the necessary challenge and support, and intervene only where necessary.

Improving outcomes

Outcomes have improved across the region at every level, at every key stage and in every authority since 2012. In most instances this has been by more than the national average.

There is a great deal more to be done to realise the full potential of children in the region.



Delivering in our targeted areas

Tables of the targets for each Key Stage within CSC are given in Appendix 2 (available on the Central South Consortium website - www.cscjes.org.uk). Performance targets by local authority are also set out in Appendix 2 of the business plan.

Our priorities to be delivered remain to:

- Close the gap in outcomes for children and young people in poverty and for looked after children by a quarter by 2015/2016 and a third by 2016/2017.
- Raise standards in English and Welsh first language and mathematics so that: nine out of every ten pupils reach the expected outcome/ level in the Foundation Phase and at key stages 2 and 3 by July 2016; between a third and two-fifths of pupils reach the expected outcome/ level + 1 in the Foundation Phase and key stage 2 and over half at key stage 3 also by July 2016.
- Raise standards at key stage 4 in English by a further 14%, Welsh by 4% and mathematics by 9% by September 2016 compared with September 2014 to reach 97%, 79% and 69% respectively.
- Improve outcomes at Level 2+ by at least a further 8% by July 2016 compared with September 2014 to exceed 60%.
- Improve attendance by a further 0.9% in secondary schools and by a further 0.5% in primary schools to reach 94.5% and 95.2% respectively by September 2015. Continue this trajectory so that the region's ambition of an average of at least 95% in both sectors is achieved by September 2016.

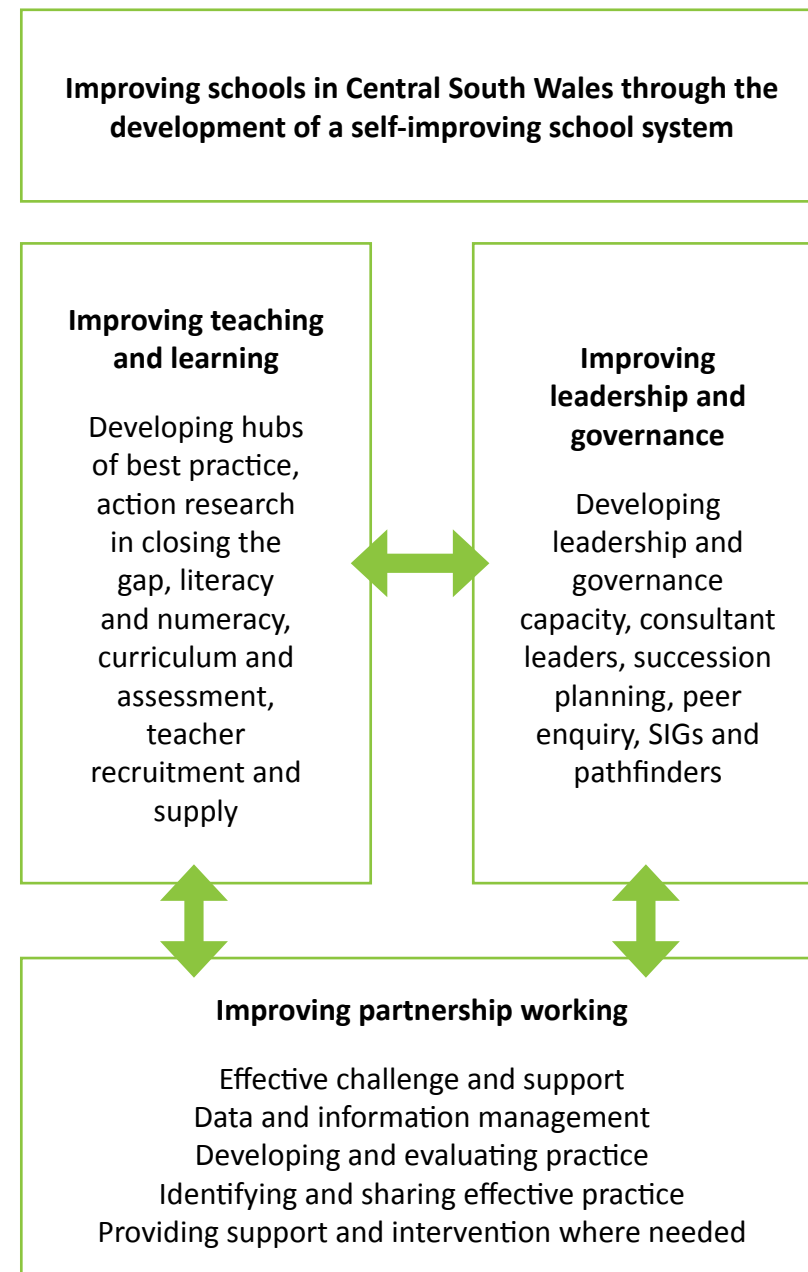
Delivery Strategy 2015/16

How will we do this?

We will achieve impact through our three big strategic aims.

We aim to:

- Improve Leadership and Governance
- Improve Teaching and Learning
- Improve Partnerships



Leadership and Governance

In 15/16 we will:

- Develop high quality leadership and middle leadership programmes led by schools (from hubs programme) to build leadership capacity in succession planning;
- Improve the consistency and quality of Human Resources (HR) support for governing bodies and schools in implementing robust continued professional development and performance management;
- Evaluate and roll out the peer enquiry model;
- Identify and develop succession planning and talent management strategies with authorities across the region in order to develop current and future excellent leaders;
- Strengthen capacity for rapid and robust intervention where needed particularly by recruiting a cadre of highly experienced 'consultant leaders' who work with schools in need of leadership support;
- Evaluate pathfinder programmes with a clear focus on improvement planning;
- Continue to develop effective joint practice development through SIGs taking on those with potential for further collaborative action research in partnership with Higher Education Institutions;
- Work with governor support services to provide consistent high quality training in good governance for school improvement;
- Develop a cadre of experienced governors and improve communication with all governors.

Teaching and Learning

In 15/16 we will:

- Develop the hubs programme providing teaching and learning programmes that link to best practice schools across the region;
- Develop a best practice knowledge bank across the region, quality assured and founded in the evidence base;
- Support lead 'closing the gap' schools recognised for their work in improving the outcomes of vulnerable learners to further develop their practice and provide support across the region;
- Continue to deliver high quality support to schools in order to enable delivery of the Literacy and Numeracy Framework and build the foundations of a literacy and numeracy school-led approach;
- Provide direct match funded support to vulnerable schools, where required, to develop sustainable improvements in teaching, leadership or outcomes for vulnerable learners;
- Engage with leading schools for support in the Foundation Phase and identify lead digital technology schools;
- Resource and develop a system of support for Welsh-medium schools and second language provision led by schools over time;
- Lead a tighter approach to moderation of teacher assessment and communication and support for curriculum change;
- Launch a collaborative action research project and teaching innovation fund across the region drawing on the strongest practice amongst schools working together;
- Work with Initial Teacher Training providers, Teach First and recruitment agencies to improve the supply of high quality teachers into the region;
- Promote working with effective schools to share practice of strategically working with 'lead

curriculum schools' and promoting excellence across the region as a building block to supporting curriculum change.

Improving Partnerships

In 15/16 we will develop good and effective practice to support a self-improving school system working in partnership with local authorities in the central south region, the strategy group, schools, Welsh Government and other regional consortia across Wales. Such work will include:

- Continuing to provide high quality challenge and support to schools in inverse proportion to success;
- Sharpening the awareness and use of best practice, improving brokerage of support for red/amber schools and evaluating impact;
- Sharpening partnership working with local authorities making sure where performance is poor and where intervention is needed, robust action can be taken and capacity is available to bring about improvement rapidly;
- Working with local authorities to improve the consistency and quality of the interface with wider services including inclusion and school organisation services;
- Launching a promise or pledge bringing community, cultural, sporting, voluntary, employer and business resources together in practical ways to get behind the efforts of schools to engage vulnerable children and families;
- Improving the provision of high quality data and access and use of information management by schools, authorities and within the consortium;
- Working with Welsh Government to ensure the timely and high quality delivery of ministerial and national priorities including the Schools Challenge Cymru programme, Qualified for Life strategies and developing programmes to support curriculum and assessment change;
- Continuing to provide value for money and focus on the most effective use of resources within the commitment to devolve more resources in flexible ways.

Budget

The budget for the organisation for 2015-16 is outlined opposite.

Local authority contributions remain unchanged from 14/15 levels. The actual apportionment by authority is based on the appropriate indicator based assessments (IBAs) published by the Welsh Government as part of the 2015/16 revenue budget settlement.

Category	Proposed Budget 2015/16 £
Expenditure	
Employees (including secondments and school led capacity building)	3,678,308
Premises	253,733
Transport	65,000
Supplies & Services	310,444
Repayment of Redundancy Costs	100,000
Commissioning (Additional support for schools)	289,441
Support Services	90,000
Gross Expenditure	4,786,926

Income	
Local Authority (LA) Contributions	4,416,486
Tŷ Dysgu Income	300,440
Grants & Other Income	70,000
Total Income	4,786,926
Net Expenditure	0
<i>Budget confirmed at Joint Committee 26/03/2015</i>	

Education Improvement Grant

Although the final terms and conditions for the Education Improvement Grant (EIG) have not been received, the following principles have been agreed:

Delegation Principles

Due to the additional flexibility within the grant, the Central South Consortium has agreed with the local authorities the following principles in relation to the amount retained and delegated to schools:

- There will be an increase in the percentage of funds delegated to schools.
- The consortium will apply a protection mechanism (on a sliding scale) to all schools to prevent significant winners and losers.
- A number of grants (Minority Ethnic Achievement Grant (MEAG) and Education of Gypsy Children and Traveller Children) will continue to be administered and distributed at local authority level with a focus on impact on outcomes for these children and young people.

Centrally Retained Funding

Retention of the EIG by the Consortium and local authorities has been radically reduced. However, there will still be a need to continue to provide some time-limited support within the consortium and the local authorities.

Examples of this include:

- provision of resource to support the drive towards a school-led, self-improving system;
- provision of specific support for vulnerable schools and for the development of a headship development as a strategic priority;
- provision of high quality literacy and numeracy support on a match funded basis to vulnerable schools.

Furthermore, a small number of grants awarded to individual schools have been allocated over the academic year, not the financial; therefore these will already be committed for summer term 2015.

Delegation to Local Authorities

Funding will be released to the local authorities to fund the Foundation Phase non-maintained settings and also contribute to funding the administration support in authorities covering Welsh Audit Office fees and internal audit costs.

Delegation to schools via local authorities for specific circumstances

Funding associated with the MEAG and to meet the needs of Gypsy/Traveller pupils will be delegated to the local authorities. Funding to support 14-19 provision will be delegated to schools via the local authorities.

Delegation to Schools

The balance will be delegated to schools as a single grant according to an agreed formula with the local authorities. The consortium has applied a protection mechanism (on a sliding scale) to all schools to prevent significant winners and losers.

Education Improvement Grant	£
Centrally retained funding including literacy and numeracy support, Welsh Education Grant (WEG) and Foundation Phase provision	3,324,945
Funding held to support vulnerable schools	500,000
School Improvement Groups	564,000
Delegated to local authorities for non maintained settings	440,550
Delegated to local authorities for administration of grant	108,530
Delegated to schools via local authorities for specific circumstances – MEAG, Gypsy and Traveller Grant and 14-19	7,616,300
Delegated to schools	34,045,211
Total Grant (to be confirmed)	46,599,536

Pupil Deprivation Grant

The total amount of the Pupil Deprivation Grant for the region is £26,150,250. In line with our key priorities, schools will be required to complete their school development plan highlighting the use of the Pupil Deprivation Grant. Challenge advisers will work with schools to ensure that schools are adopting an evidence-based approach to reducing the impact of poverty on educational achievement.

Governance Framework

In this region we have a joint commitment to work in a partnership including the five authorities, schools and the consortium to monitor, evaluate, challenge, support and discuss progress towards the implementation of the business plan.

Roles and responsibilities

- **Schools** are accountable to parents, communities and local authorities through their governing bodies.
- **Local authorities** are responsible for the statutory provision of school improvement services and hold the consortium to account for providing functions on their behalf under the National Model for School Improvement. They are accountable to the electorate through their Cabinet and Scrutiny function.
- **Central South Consortium** is responsible for delivering the agreed business plan and any additional requested agreed actions working closely with the authorities. It is governed through a Joint Committee with responsibility for agreeing budget and priorities. The consortium's managing director is advised by an advisory board with guidance from directors of education as well as steering groups of representative schools and governors.

In addition

- **Welsh Government** holds the consortium to account for delivery against the national priorities and national model through challenge and review sessions. This involves the lead director and is held each term.

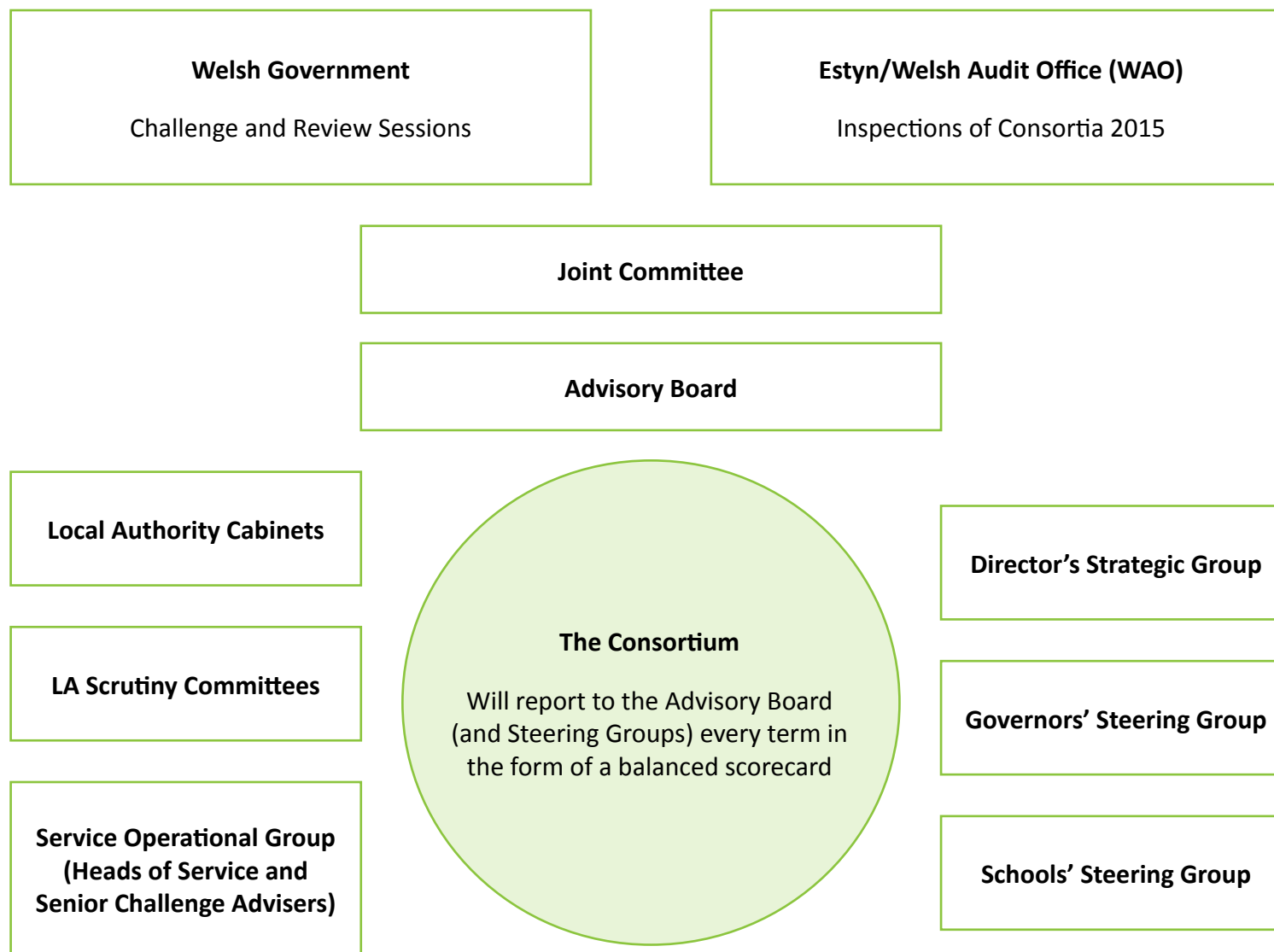
Membership of groups:

- Joint Committee meets termly and includes portfolio holders in each authority, the lead chief executive and lead director and meets each term.
- CSC advisory board meets termly and includes the lead director, the Welsh Government, a local authority cabinet member representing the Joint Committee and up to five external experts, one of whom will be the chair of the advisory board. The board meets twice per term.
- The directors' strategic group meets monthly and includes all five education directors with statutory responsibility for education.
- The service operational group meets monthly and includes heads of service in education functions in the local authorities as well as senior officers in the consortium.
- Steering groups (School Leaders' Group and Governors' Group) meet termly and as far as possible include elected or representative headteachers and governors from the five authorities.

Reporting arrangements

- **Annual reporting on performance (in the autumn term) to the Joint Committee**
- **Self-evaluation report (by the end of the autumn term) to the Joint Committee** including a comprehensive needs analysis of the region, with stakeholder and staff input setting priorities for attention in the forthcoming year/ financial year – leading into the development of the next business plan
- **Proposals for the new business plan priorities and targets (in the spring term)** to Joint Committee including budget setting proposals.
- **Annual reporting against budget (in the summer term) to the Joint Committee**
- **Termly progress reporting** to scrutiny committees and to local authorities' directors on progress against the agreed priorities in each local authority's annexe to the business plan.

Accountability Architecture



Conclusion: A three year vision for the region

This business case sets out our plans for the 2015/16 year. If we are successful in our work together we will see significant improvements in educational outcomes and a closing of the gap at every level across the region as measured by the targets set out in this business plan.

By 2017/18 if we are building on our progress to date we would expect to see a radical change in the way schools, the consortium and authorities work with each other and across the region. At the minimum we would expect to see:

- The majority of schools producing effective self-evaluation and improvement plans investing in support without input from the consortium, demonstrating robust accountability for their improvement;
- Schools investing in innovative action research and practice development with other schools across the region, many will work with one or two other schools to achieve shared outcomes and will use a common pricing system to access research led support or programmes from schools across the region, organised and quality assured by the hubs programme;
- Significantly improved school governance providing effective constructive leadership and challenge to the majority of schools;
- Challenge advisers supported by the data team provide monitoring and intervention on behalf of the authorities in high risk schools, support joint practice development and engage on a light touch basis with other schools as required;
- The regional strategy group coordinating policy or curriculum changes and brokering and evaluating the development of best practice across the region;
- Minimal centralised support other than that based in or delivered by schools through the hubs and collaborative partnerships models;
- Authorities responsible for support for vulnerable children and young people, provision of school places and intervention in schools where needed.

We look forward to working with you to realise this vision for the children and young people in the Central South region.



The Central South Wales Challenge

Taking our work into a second year





CENTRAL SOUTH WALES CHALLENGE
HER CANOL DE CYMRU

Where next for schools?

Since January 2014, schools across the five Central South Wales local authorities have been collaborating in order to find more effective ways of improving the quality of education for all of their children and young people. This document summarises what has been achieved so far. It also provides suggestions as to what schools need to do in order to build on this success.

What is the Central South Wales Challenge?

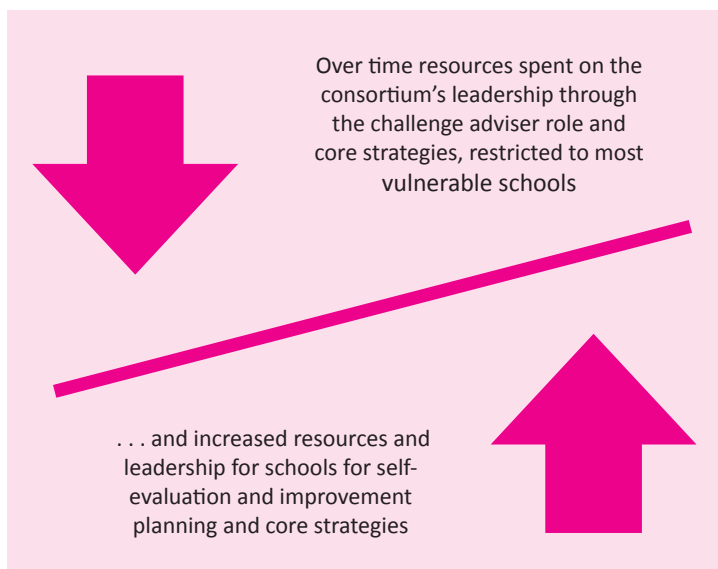
It is a partnership of over 400 schools that are working together to develop a self-improving system. This is in-line with the Welsh Government's education improvement plan, 'Qualified for Life', which argues for:

"Transforming school improvement from being something that was once 'done to' schools to something that is being 'done by' schools."

"An end to the top-down improvement 'service' being delivered to schools and instead seeking to empower school leaders to work together, taking control of their futures and their development."

"Those within schools taking responsibility for raising standards within their own organisations. This requires a strengthening of the partnerships between schools, such that they are able to support and challenge one another."

The Challenge involves a series of collaborative activities for putting this thinking into action. It was instigated by the Directors of the five authorities, who have continued to provide active support and encouragement. Further endorsement has been provided by elected Members. Staff of the Consortium play important roles in supporting the programme of activities. Additional funding and support is provided through Schools Challenge Cymru as part of its capacity building role across the country.

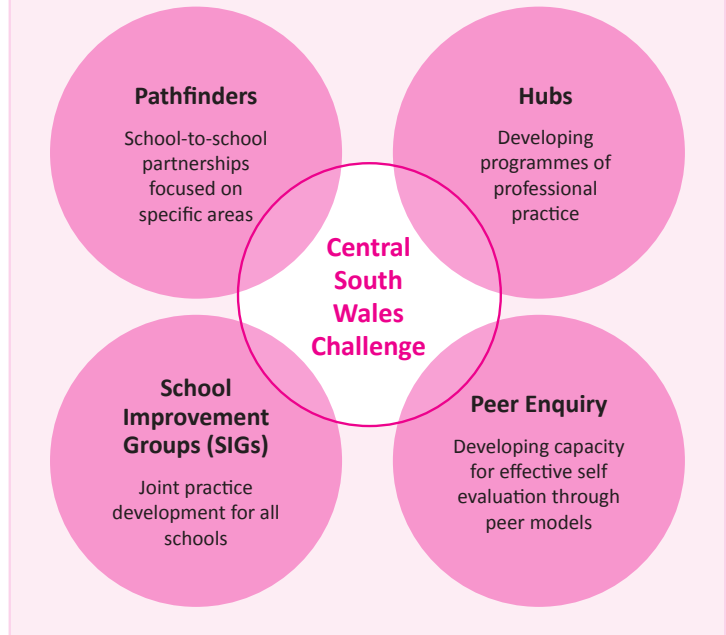


What is the strategy?

The strategy is intended to be by schools, for schools. With this as a key principle, activities are planned and coordinated by a strategy group made up of 18 headteachers. Representing each of the authorities and all phases of the system, they have taken on important roles in leading events and meetings and ensuring effective communication with the schools in their own authorities.

So far, the strategy has involved four linked activities:

Schools identify which approach they wish to draw on from the outcomes of robust self-evaluation and identification of improvement priorities



School improvement groups (SIGs) – All schools are in cross-region improvement groups. Carefully arranged so as to bring together schools that are at different stages of development, there are 33 primary SIGs, each with 10 members, and 8 secondary SIGs, each made up of between 5 and 8 schools. Special schools are also involved. A headteacher in each group acts as the convenor.

Pathfinder partnerships – More intensive pairings of schools have been created in order to provide intensive support for those seen as facing challenging circumstances. Significantly, there is growing evidence that such arrangements can have a positive impact on the learning of pupils in both of the partner schools. So far, there have been 52 such partnerships, usually involving pairings of schools from different authorities. Further such partnerships have been created through Schools Challenge Cymru.

Peer enquiry – This aims to develop a systematic process by which senior leaders in different schools can support one another through peer review. So far, it has involved 6 pairs (or trios) of schools, chosen because they are already performing relatively well. Once the process is refined, it will be rolled out for use by more schools from September 2015 as a means of developing effective self-evaluation and leadership capacity across the system.

Improvement hubs – These 30 schools are developing professional learning programmes for teachers and leaders across the system. Currently, they are offering support to other schools aimed at strengthening teaching and learning, and leadership practice. A number of the Hubs also offer more specialist or bespoke support. In addition, the Hubs will be leading collaborative action research involving schools across the region and coordinating the development of a best practice case studies knowledge bank.

The introduction of this approach means a significant shift in the roles of the team of challenge advisers. Specifically, they have to support and enable effective self-evaluation, as well as brokering the sharing of good practice across the system, intervening only where absolutely necessary.

What has been the impact?

The first 18 months of the Challenge have been very promising, with high levels of engagement across the region, including over 200 teachers taking part in the Outstanding and Improving Teacher Programmes (OTP and ITP), and over 600 delegates accessing Hub support since January 2015. The following comments from school leaders are typical:

School Improvement Groups and Pathfinders

“Convening our SIG has been one of the most exciting and rewarding professional activity in which I have been involved.”

“I think we can become a system where we seek expertise from one another and are open to share our own ideas and to give freely of our own expertise. It will allow us to openly but supportively challenge each other to do better.”

"The freedom of being able to make decisions for our own schools, based on many collective years of experience has been refreshing."

Hub Programmes

"The standard of discussion and the quality of questioning from facilitators was exemplary."

"Every person in the school from pupil to caretaker took part in making the day memorable and full of ideas and stimulation."

"Teachers were made to reflect on their own practices and to think and re-focus ideas in the light of theory but not in a dry way but in the light of living practice."

Peer Review

"Possibly the best CPD a Head could have"

"Unlike an Estyn inspection or LEA type review this is an opportunity for some real honesty and reflection between peer professionals"

We are already seeing a significant shift in the impact of school-to-school work being evidenced in school inspection, in impact on outcomes and in capacity building across the region. Already schools are reporting a greater openness to work with others, more creative use of time by teachers, and leaders working together to strengthen their practices. Critically, many schools are using these activities to think about succession planning and structures within schools. This includes providing ways to develop all staff, reducing the use of temporary or supply staff, and identifying future leaders across schools.

What has been learnt?

As we have developed these strategies we are learning about what is working and where changes can be made. Some of our learning points so far are:

Effective school-to-school working . . .

- **comes from knowing your own school really well and being demanding** about what your school needs. Matching areas of strength to areas needing support is important in this. Schools need to focus on identifying what they need in their school and use partnerships with other schools to access capacity or capability to improve. Schools should choose, lead or create the right partnership for them and hold it to account for impact on their school's capacity to improve
- **works best when it is about practice.** The biggest impact is where headteachers have enabled teachers to work together in a focused way on an area of practice they want to improve or develop and share across a group of schools and that will improve pupils' learning and achievement.
- **is all about developing teachers and leaders and succession planning.** If funding and planning are done well, school-to-school working means identifying talented staff and releasing them to grow and develop through working with other schools to develop practice
- **means taking (measurable) risks** e.g. in staffing structures and 'enquiry' led practice developments. Impact measures are key and evaluation and risk management vital but some of our work means backing initiative, innovation and 'tall poppies' to bring real shifts in how schools work
- **often works better when schools are different** and not close to each other. Although this brings different logistical challenges, school partnership working has worked best where schools are not serving similar catchments
- **when it is led by schools (but with sufficient organisational capacity to get things going).** This means that school leaders need to spend time directing what is needed, should be supported to do so, albeit from

within a limited funding envelope, and in the Consortium and Local Authority staff need to be able to administer systems efficiently

- **takes time and funding.** This work is not about quick fixes nor is it cheap, it is about building capacity and capability in leadership of school improvement. Accountability regimes need to recognise that whilst some benefits are already evident, the real benefits may take some time

What will change as a result?

As a result of evaluating the first year a number of changes have been made ahead of the second year of the Challenge.

In particular:

1. SIG funding will continue with a focus on indicators that help evaluate impact
2. Pathfinder partnerships and funding will also continue brokered by challenge advisers
3. Schools Challenge Cymru funding will be used to support the development of the role of the SIG convenor
4. Funding will also be identified to incentivise the development of peer enquiry
5. The hubs programme will be more focused on developing collaborative practice, alongside a number of lead curriculum departments/schools
6. Specific school-to-school projects will focus particularly on growing self-improving systems for Welsh medium schools and special schools

Challenge advisers have already shifted their focus towards supporting effective self-evaluation led by headteachers and governing bodies. This will continue with challenge advisers spending less time with schools with greater capacity for improvement. Challenge advisers will focus on how schools are using the CSWC strategies in place to develop capacity and impact. A core role of the Consortium is to evaluate and share best practice.

What should be the next steps?

It would make sense now for individual schools to review the extent to which they are benefiting from the investment being made through the Central South Wales Challenge. In so doing, it is important to remember that self-improving systems start with what happens within each school. Each school must have a sense of their own strengths, such that these contribute to the overall development of the education system. At the same time, it is vital to define areas of the school that need further development in order to draw on the strengths of partner schools.

Building on such a process of self-review, schools need to consider the following questions:

- Are we contributing to, and getting the benefits of joint practice development through our SIG?
- Would we benefit from being part of a pathfinder partnership?
- Can we draw more on the strengths of the various improvement hubs?
- Are we ready to take part in the peer enquiry programme?
- Looking more widely, there is much more to do in order to deepen the partnerships across the system such that they involve a capacity to move expertise around, as well as encouraging joint practice development. This requires a willingness amongst school leaders and practitioners to share evidence with one another. In this way, collaboration involves processes of mutual challenge that will stimulate creativity and experimentation.

Long-term aim

The long term aim of the Central South Wales Challenge is to maximise the leadership of school improvement by schools for schools, with minimal input and resources held at regional and local authority level. We believe that we can develop a world-class system of education by making better use of the

expertise available in the region's schools. In so doing, it will be important to raise the aspirations of all young people and their parents and give them confidence in education.

This will require the involvement of families as well as representatives of the wider community. Closing the gap in outcomes between those from more and less advantaged backgrounds will only happen when what happens to children and young people outside as well as inside the school changes. This does not necessarily mean schools doing more, but it does imply partnerships beyond the school, where partners multiply the impact of each other's efforts.

Further information

Further information about the Central South Wales Challenge is available from:

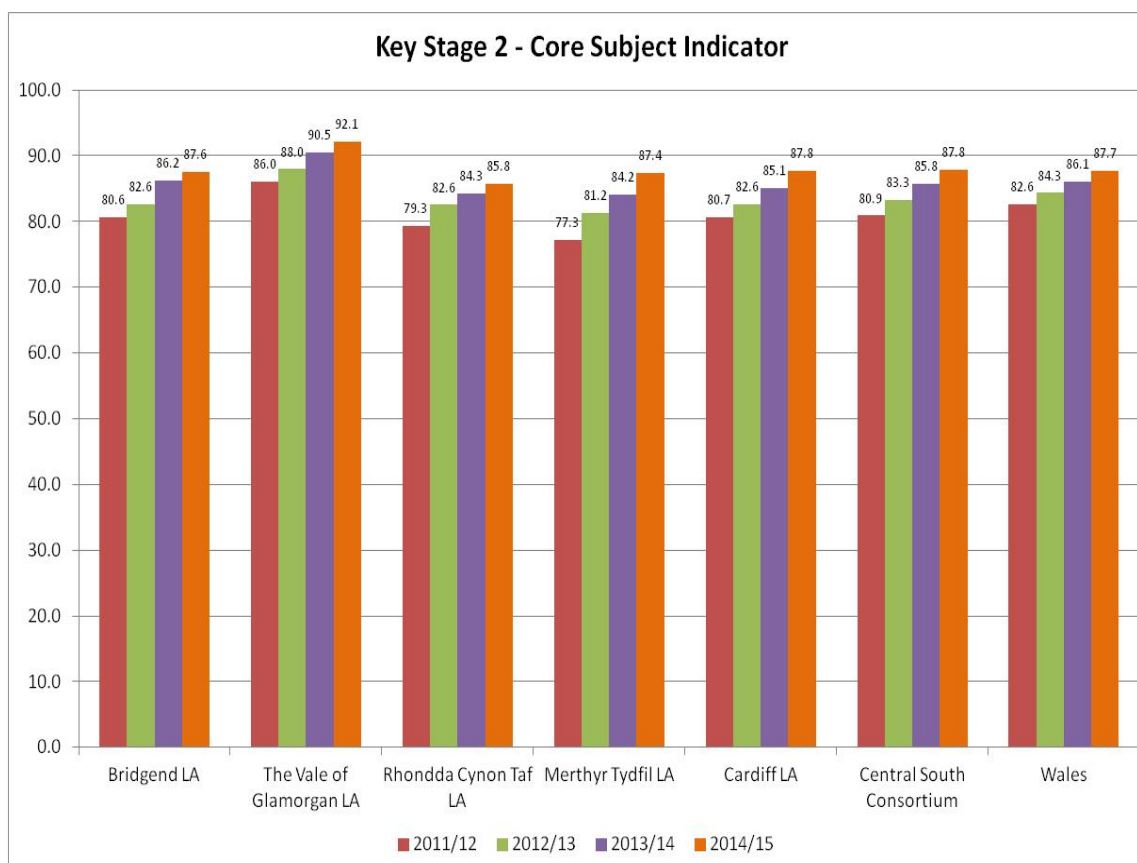
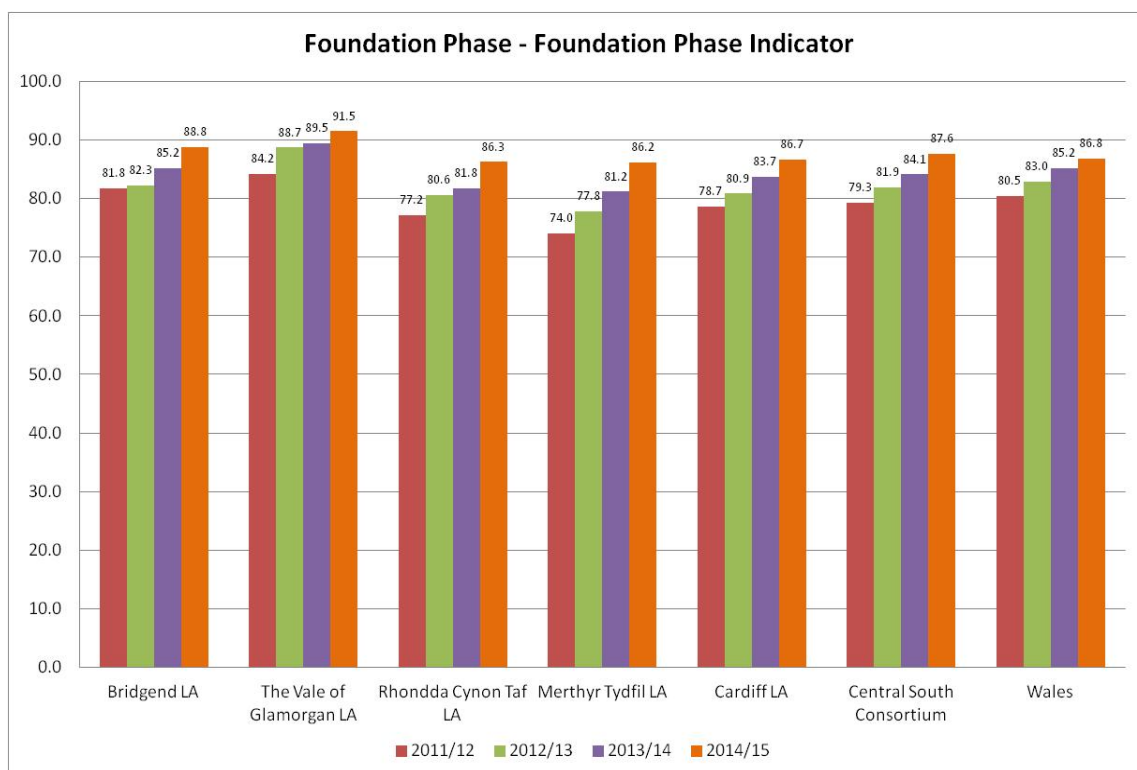
Central South Wales Challenge Strategy Group

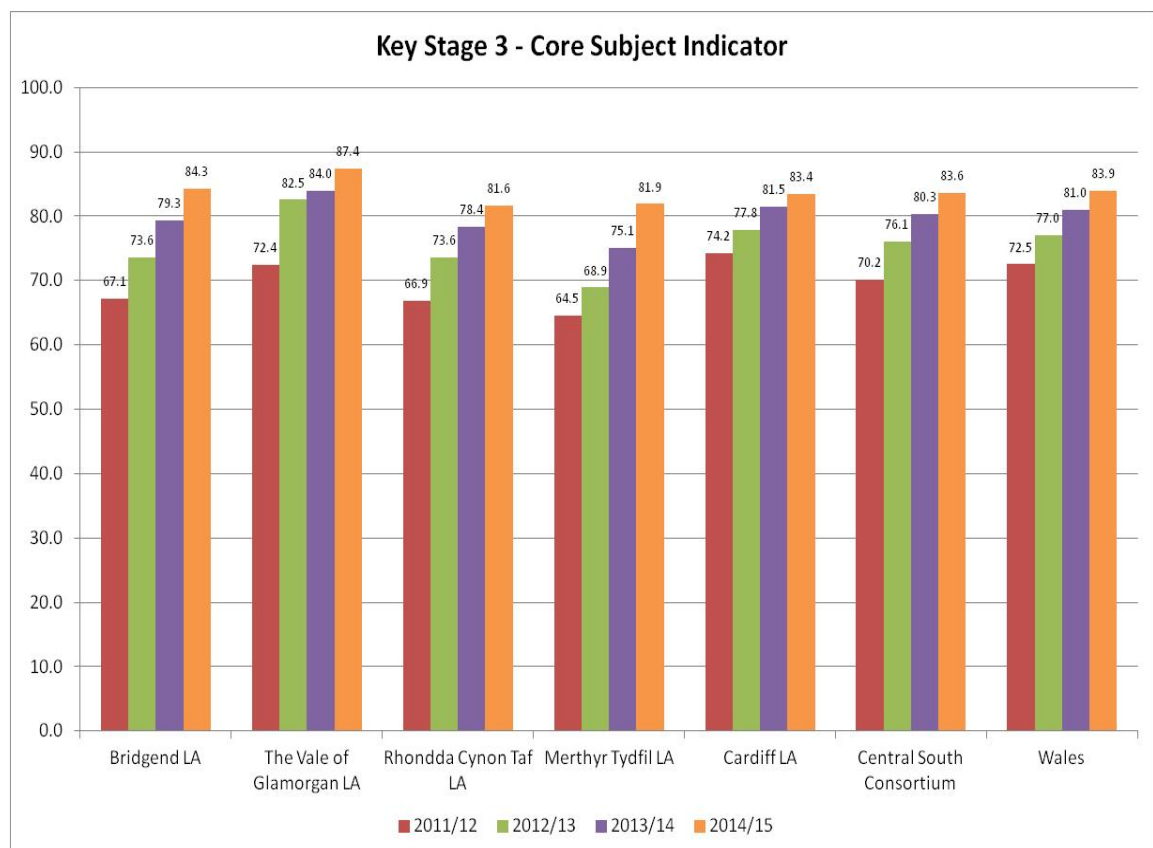
- Jeremy Thompson (Oldcastle Primary School)
- Anne Carhart (Maesteg School)
- Steve Jones (Cardiff High School)
- Bethan Hocking (Herbert Thompson Primary School)
- Angela Satterly (St Alban's Catholic Primary School)
- Vicky Meadows (Windsor Clive Primary School)
- Kevin Tansley (Ty Gwyn Special School)
- Elizabeth Owen (Ysgol y Graig)
- Rhys Jones (Treorchy Comprehensive School)
- Vanessa McCarthy (Brynnau Primary School)
- Dr Alec Clark (Tai Education Centre)
- Kelvin Law (Romilly Primary School)
- Derek Jones (Stanwell School)

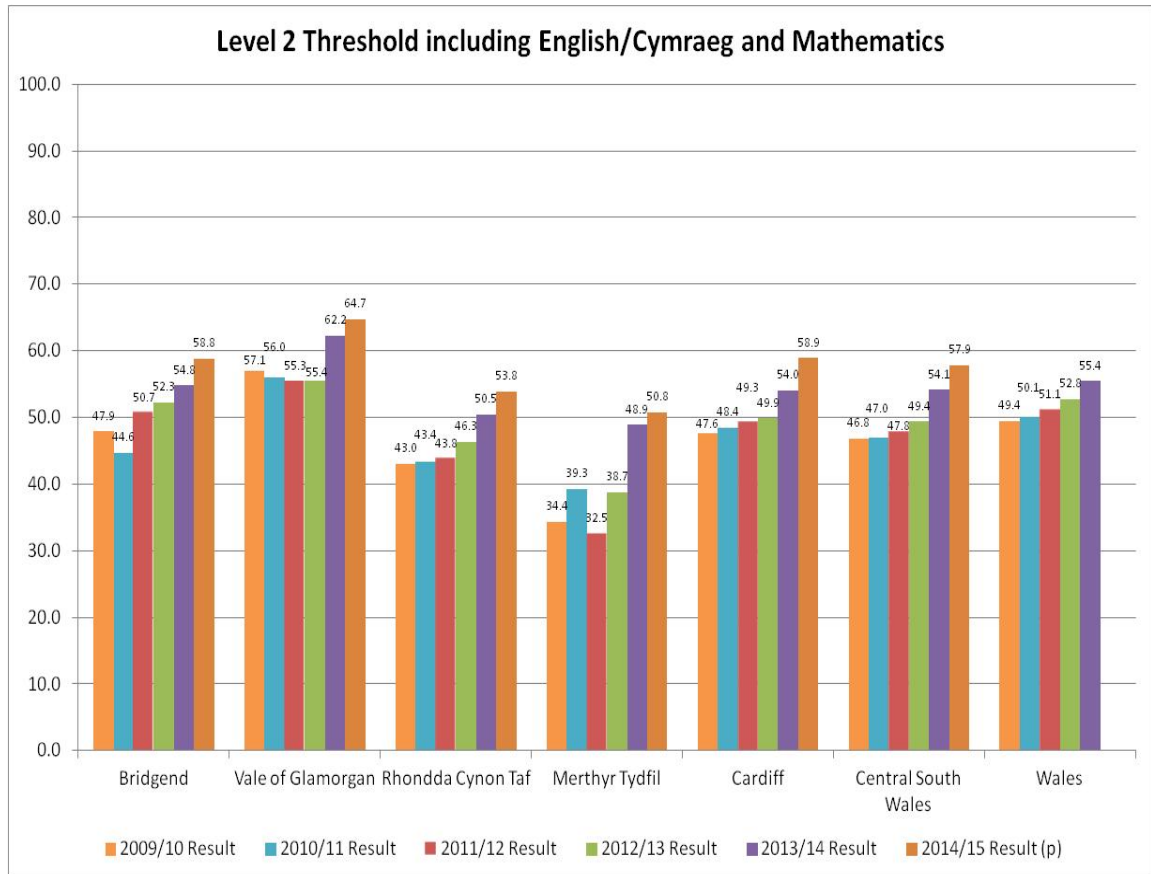
- Mark Powell (Y Pant Comprehensive)
- Tegwen Ellis (Ysgol Cynwyd Sant)
- Dr Dylan Jones (Ysgol Gyfun Bro Morgannwg)

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Appendix 3**Annex : Headline results across the Central South region**





The gap between children eligible for free school meals (FSM) and those not (non FSM) has narrowed at every indicator across the region, including in MTBC.

