

evaluation seeks to recognise our strengths and weaknesses and ensure that we have the plans in place to develop the strengths and address the weaknesses.



STRONG HERITAGE | STRONG FUTURE
RHONDDA CYNON TAF
TREFTADAETH GADARN | DYFODOL SICR

Rhondda Cynon Taf

Self-Evaluation

February 2014

Where possible all outcomes include 2012/13 academic year data.
The following will be updated when released

Data	When	Source
Achievement & pupil characteristic	March 2014 (not yet published)	WG website
NEETS-Career's Wales annual survey	April 2014 (not yet published)	Careers Wales website

KEY QUESTION 1: HOW GOOD ARE OUTCOMES? Quality Indicator: 1.1. Standards Evaluation	Evidence
1.1.1 Results Compared with National Averages, Similar Providers and Prior Attainment	
<p>Click here for details of Rhondda Cynon Taf's Educational context and comparable Authorities</p> <p>All 2013 teacher assessment results at foundation phase, KS2 and KS3 have improved compared to 2012.</p> <p>In 2013, the rate of improvement in 14 of the 15 key measures has been higher than for Wales as a whole which has enabled the Authority to close the gap to the All Wales average. Only foundation phase PSD has improved at a slower rate than the All Wales data.</p> <p>Since our last Estyn inspection (2011 data) all KS3 indicators and 4 out of 5 KS2 indicators have improved annually with all indicators now higher than in 2011.</p> <p>Directly comparable data is not available for year 2 pupils due to the change from KS1 to foundation phase.</p> <p>Provisional performance measures for key stage 4 indicate strong progress since 2011. RCT's rate of improvement exceeds national increases in all key indicators for 2013.</p> <p>Although outcomes have improved and our rankings are around our free school meals (FSM) expected position, there are too many schools below the median of their respective FSM benchmarking group across all key stages. In order to narrow the gap to the highest performing authorities in Wales and improve outcomes for all pupils we need to further reduce the variance within and between our schools.</p>	
Foundation Phase	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2013, 80.6% of RCT pupils achieved the foundation phase outcome indicator (FPI) compared to 83.0% nationally – a difference of 2.4 percentage points. This ranked us 19 out of the 22 Authorities, an improvement from 20th in 2012, slightly higher than our FSM ranking for 2013 Looking at the individual areas of learning the gap between our performance and the All Wales data has decreased for all areas except PSD. Rankings have improved in MDT and LCE, remained the same in LCW and decreased in PSD. MDT has improved from 20th to 16th. Since 2012, the percentage of RCT pupils achieving the FPI has improved from 77.2% to 80.6% - an improvement of 3.4 percentage points, enabling us to close the gap to the all Wales average. The 2013 FPI results show that we are fourth out of the five consortium Authorities - although we have the highest FSM percentage. 	
KS2	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2013 results continued the upward trend in all subjects with the rate of improvement being higher than nationally. Our CSI result ranks us 17 out of the 22 Authorities. An improvement from 20th in 2012 and higher than our FSM ranking. The CSI outcome in 2013 was 82.6% – with the gap between RCT and the All Wales average decreasing from 3.3 to 1.7 percentage points. When looking at our consortium Authorities this places us equal 2nd out of the 5 authorities. Trends since 2011 have shown levels of improvement greater than Wales in all indicators except Welsh 1st language. 	
KS3	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over the past 3 years ALL indicators have improved at a greater rate than the All Wales average. • 2013 produced the Authority's best results in the CSI and all core subjects. • Since 2012 we have improved our CSI position within the consortium from 4th to 3rd. RCT is now 3rd in 3 of the 5 measures. This is higher than our expected position based on FSM of 5th. 	
Progress between key stages	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The majority of pupils make the expected levels of progress between key stages. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In 2011, between key stage 1 and key stage 2 over 73.5% of pupils improved by at least 2 levels, this percentage had increased to 80.6% by 2013. The highest percentage being in English (90.5%) and the lowest in Welsh (80.6%). All subjects showed improvement over the 2011 percentages. ○ In 2013, between key stage 2 and key stage 3, over 31% of pupils improved by at least 2 levels, the highest being Maths (42.5%) and the lowest Welsh (31.1%). • Comparing 2013 results with 2011, all measures have shown an improvement in the percentage of pupils progressing at least 2 levels. 	
KS4	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All key indicators improved in 2013 with all improvements being greater than for the All Wales data. The rate of improvement was more than double the All Wales improvement for 5 of the 6 indicators enabling the gap between RCT performance and the Welsh average to narrow. • For the Level 2 indicator RCT results outperformed the All Wales data for the first time. • In 2012, amongst the CSC Authorities we were 2nd for Level 2 and 5th for the average wider points score with the others being 4th. • In 2012, when compared to schools' FSM benchmarking criteria, CSI performance remains very good and in the top quartile, Level 2 and Level 2 Incl. E/W & M are in the 2nd quartile and level 1 in the 3rd quartile. 	
KS5	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results for 2013 show the percentage of pupils achieving the Level 3 indicator has improved although not as quickly as the all Wales data. • The average wider points score has decreased for both RCT and the All Wales data with the drop being greater in RCT. • Since, 2011, although both measures have improved the gap to the all Wales data has widened. 	
FSM benchmarking Quartiles	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When looking at school level key stage assessment outcomes across the FSM benchmarking quartiles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ performance at key stage 3 indicates that only science has more than 50% of schools above the median of their FSM group. 2 of the 5 main indicators have 25% or more of schools in the top quartile with the same percentage having more than 25% of schools in the bottom quartile. English has fallen from 52.63% of schools above the median in 2011 to 31.58% in 2013. ○ Performance at key stage 2 shows no indicators have more than 25% of schools in the top quartile and 2 indicators with 25% or more schools in the bottom quartile (although both under 26%). Only the core subject indicator has more than 50% of schools above the median of their FSM group. 4 of the 5 indicators have an improvement in the percentage of schools above their FSM group median. ○ Performance at foundation phase can only be compared to 2012 results. In 2013, 4 of the 5 indicators had more than 25% of schools in the top quartile of their FSM group with the Foundation Phase Indicator having 30.48% of schools in the top quartile compared to 21.5% in 2012. In 2013, 3 of the indicators had more than 25% of schools in the bottom quartile of their FSM 	

group the same as in 2012.

- In 2013, when RCT schools are compared with similar schools nationally, more than half of RCT are above the median of their FSM group in 4 of the 5 indicators compared to 1 indicator in 2011 and none in 2012.

Year/ Indicator	Level 1	Level 2	Level 2 incl. E/W & M	A.C.W.P.S.	C.S.I
2010/11	47.37%	52.63%	36.84%	31.58%	42.11%
2011/12	26.32%	42.11%	42.11%	36.84%	47.37%
2012/13	57.89%	63.16%	57.89%	47.37%	63.16%

Post 16 – NEETS/LENQ

- Provisional data for 2013 indicates that there has been an increase in the percentage of year 11 pupils remaining in full time education from 86% to 87.6%
- For the latest available finalised data (2012), the percentage of year 11 pupils in Rhondda Cynon Taf who stay in full-time post 16 education is 86% which is an increase of 1.6% points since 2010 and above the All Wales data of 84.6%. Whilst the percentage staying on in school has remained constant, there has been an increase in those continuing in college.
- Since 2010 the percentage of year 11 RCT pupils attending full-time post 16 education has increased by 1.6% compared to 1.8% nationally.
- For pupils leaving year 13 the percentage in Rhondda Cynon Taf who plan to go onto further study is 79.9% - above the All Wales figure of 78.8%. Nationally, the percentage of year 13 pupils intending to progress to higher education has decreased by 0.3% but remained constant in RCT.
- The focus of the Council has been on areas we can influence with a range of programmes and interventions producing positive results (Building the Future Together, Bridges in to Work, Future Jobs Fund) both in securing employment and providing individuals with skills to gain employment in the future. Between 2010 and 2012, these interventions have seen a reduction in the level of year 11 leavers becoming NEET by 1.2% points and year 13 leavers becoming NEET by 2.6% points. Provisional data for 2013 indicate a further reduction of 0.45% points for year 11 and 3.39% points for year 13. Resulting in NEET levels of 4.05% and 5.61% respectively.
- The Bridges into Work project engages with young people aged 16-19 who are recorded as not in education employment or training. Between August 2011 and July 2013, 1,333 new participants joined the project. Over the same period over 2,000 qualifications were gained and 155 job outcomes achieved
- BTFT final evaluation indicates that the BTFT project has had positive impact on a range of young people who were or are likely to become NEET.
- The number of pupils leaving education without a qualification fell in 2012 to 0.9% and fell further in 2013 to 0.5% - the 2013 figure representing 16 pupils- compared with 30 in 2011. This ranks RCT 17th an improvement from 20th in 2011. While performance is still below the all Wales data the gap has halved from 0.4 to 0.2%

Value Added

- the FFT value added contextual analysis of LEA 2012 (SX model) outcomes at key stage 4 from key stage 3 shows that attainment is higher than expected for % Level 2 and % core subjects (A*-C). Average wider points score and mean grade were significantly below expectations. This showed significant improvement in 2013 with all measures significantly above expectations for the SX model and all except Level 2+ and mean grade significantly above for PA model.
- Key stage 2 from key stage 1 FFT value added for 2012 generally shows an improving trend from 2011 although most measures still have at least some areas of performance significantly below estimates for both models. Results for 2013 paint a similar picture although English shows some improvement, especially for boys.

- The WG value added analysis for 2012 outcomes indicates that at an LA level, value added Model 2a, performance at KS4 from KS3 shows values significantly higher than expected in 3 of the 7 indicators. Comparisons at key stage 4 from key stage 2 shows a very similar picture to that for key stage 4 from key stage 3. As with outcome data, performance at school level varies significantly.

SSU Secondary Bandings

- The 2013 secondary school bandings showed that RCT had schools across all bands. In 2011 36.8% of RCT schools were in bands 1-3, this has increased to 57.9% by 2013.
- In 2013 there are 20 schools in Band 1 across 9 local authorities, this compares to 29 schools across 16 authorities in 2011.

Year/Band	1	2	3	4	5	Percentage Band 1-3
2011	2	3	2	9	3	36.8%
2012	1	1	4	7	6	31.6%
2013	2	4	5	5	3	57.9%

Estyn: School Inspections

- During academic year 2011/2012 under the new Common Inspection Framework 19 primary, 5 secondary and 1 special school were inspected. In academic year 2012/13 17 primary and 1 secondary schools were inspected. In the first two terms of 2013/14 10 schools have been inspected – 7 primary and 3 PRUs
- The outcomes can be summarised as:

Current Performance	Unsatisfactory	Adequate	Good	Excellent
Academic Year 2011/2012	0	11	12	2
Academic Year 2012/2013	0	7	11	0
Autumn/Spring Term 2013/14	0	7	2	1
Percentage	0.0%	47%	57%	6%

Prospects for improvement	Unsatisfactory	Adequate	Good	Excellent
Academic Year 2011/2012	0	4	19	2
Academic Year 2012/2013	0	4	13	1
Autumn/Spring Term 2013/14	0	3	6	1
Percentage	0.0%	21%	72%	8%

Achievement and Attainment through Informal Learning

The Authority and partners continue to offer a wide range of non-formal learning opportunities for young people to gain qualifications and skills;

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The authority continues to see good engagement levels of non-formal accredited qualifications gained by young people engaging with SFYP with an increase of 68% from 2010-11 to 2011-12 and a 110% increase in the number of individual young people gaining these qualifications. • Services for Young People has also seen a good uptake for GCSE courses delivered as part of its e3+ programme (out of school hours learning), in particular GCSE Astronomy and Horticulture. To date 24 young people have achieved a GCSE with 109 young people enrolled for the academic year 2013-14. • Nationally SFYP continues to perform significantly above the Welsh average with 21% of learners/young people engaged gaining national qualifications compared to 11% nationally (2012-13). This equates to a 3% increase on 2011-12 and a 10% increase on 2010-11. • Duke of Edinburgh Award performance continues to improve with the number of young people achieving an award increasing by 28% compared to 2011-12 and 165% increase compared to 2010-11. • SFYP has seen a good increase in the number of young people entering paid employment as a result of engaging in SFYP provision. A total of 55 young people entered paid employed in 2012/13 an increase of 48 on 2011/12. 	
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KEY QUESTION 1: HOW GOOD ARE OUTCOMES? Quality Indicator: 1.1 Standards Evaluation	Evidence
1.1.2 How Good are the Standards of Groups of Learners	
Gender	
<p>Over the last three years the performance analysed by gender has fluctuated across the key stages. For the CSI;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FP – Since 2012 the performance of boys in RCT has improved at a faster rate than for Wales as a whole, although the performance of girls has fallen by 0.2 % points. The gender gap in RCT for 2012 was 14.3 compared to 10.2 nationally, this has now reduced to 7.1 percentage points and is now narrower than nationally [this is in part due to the performance of girls not improving over this period]. • KS2 – Since 2011 the performance of both boys and girls in RCT has improved faster than for Wales. While the gender gap in RCT is higher than across Wales it has narrowed in the last three years. • KS3 – Performance trends are similar to KS2 with both RCT boys and girls improving faster than for Wales as a whole. The gender gap in 2013 was higher than in 2011 and is also wider than across Wales as a whole. <p>In the foundation phase all subjects except Welsh has seen a fall in performance for girls since 2012, while boys have improved in all subjects. Since 2011, at both KS2 and KS3 all subjects have seen improvements for both boys and girls.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2013, KS4 – 4 out of the 6 key indicators have seen girls improve faster than girls across Wales. Boys have improved in all indicators at a greater rate than for Wales as a whole. This has led to a narrowing of the gap between boys and girls in RCT in all indicators except the wider average point score. • In 2013, KS5 – since 2011 RCT boys have improved faster than RCT girls in the level 3 threshold although this is partly due to girls' performance falling slightly. 	
Free School Meals – 2013 data available March 2014	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At foundation phase the gap between FSM/Non FSM pupils in RCT is significantly narrower for LCW than for Wales as a whole. This is due to both FSM pupils outperforming the Welsh average and under performance by non-FSM pupils. Other gaps are similar to the national data with FPOI slightly narrower and LCE, MDT and PSD slightly wider. • The gap at key stage 2 for 2013 has narrowed compared to 2011 for all subjects except Welsh second language. Compared to the all Wales data the FSM gap in 2013 is slightly higher for English, Maths and CSI, significantly higher for Science and significantly lower for Welsh first language. As with the foundation phase the 	

<p>gap is narrower for welsh first language due to both FSM pupils outperforming the Welsh average and under performance by non-FSM pupils.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At key stage 3 the FSM gap in all subjects, except the CSI has narrowed since 2011 and is narrower than for Wales in Welsh first language and Maths. Again this is due to a combination of FSM pupils performing above the Welsh average and non-FSM pupils underachieving. Results at KS4 show that the gap is significantly narrower for the level 1 and level 2 thresholds with both FSM and non FSM pupils having exceeded their all Wales equivalent measure. The gap is slightly narrower for level 2 including E/W & M and CSI . While both FSM and non FSM pupils performance is below their all Wales equivalent measure non-FSM pupils are further below for both measures. 	
Able & Talented 2013 benchmarking data available March 2014	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The percentage of A*-A awarded at GCSE in 2012 was 14.12% slightly lower than the 2011 data of 14.84%. The percentage of A*-A awarded at A level in 2012 was 19.79% an increase from 17.96% in 2011. 	
SEN 2013 benchmarking data available March 2014	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For 2013, 52.21% of pupils in RCT registered as school action achieved the FPI compared to 49.5% in 2012 and 53.4% (2012) nationally. Figures for school action plus pupils were 31.21% compared to 33.33% in 2012 and 36.0% (2012) nationally. At KS2 the percentage of 'school action' pupils achieving the CSI for RCT was 55.91% compared to 48.57% in 2012 and 60.3% (2012) nationally. Figures for 'school action plus' pupils were 38.42% compared to 42.39% in 2012 and 42.0% (2012) nationally. At KS3 the percentage of 'school action' pupils achieving the CSI in RCT was 31.10% compared to 24.5% in 2012 and 40.7% (2012) nationally. Figures for 'school action plus' pupils were 26.09% compared to 18.4% in 2012 and 31.3% (2012) nationally. 	
LAC 2013 benchmarking data available March 2014	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The achievement of Looked after Children can fluctuate due to small cohorts and a greater percentage of LAC pupils who have identified special educational needs. In 2013 the percentage achieving the CSI increased at both KS2 and KS3 (KS2: 40.7% to 55.56% and KS3 20.0% to 27.78%). At KS4, in 2013 93.55% of Looked after Children achieved 2 or more GCSEs. This is an increase from the 2012 data of 85.7%. The percentage of the LAC cohort who left school without a qualification was 3.23%, a slight increase from the 2012 percentage (2.8%). The percentage of LAC who are not in Education, Employment or Training at 16 continues to fall (08/09 - 30%, 09/10 -20.8%, 10/11 – 5.5%, 11/12 – 3%, 12/13 – 2.8%, 13/14 – 3.23%) 	
Ethnic Minorities 2013 benchmarking data available March 2014	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ethnic population is relatively small (1.5%) therefore outcomes between years are liable to fluctuate. The performance of our ethnic population in general, outperforms the relevant RCT cohort as a whole across all key stages. 	
English as an Additional Language (EAL) 2013 benchmarking data available March 2014	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As at July 2013 the LA supported 623 pupils with EAL, compared to 460 in January 2012. Of these 62% (45% in 2011/12) moved through at least one stage of the WG language acquisition stages since accessing MEAG support. In 2012/13 68% of EAL learners achieved the CSI at the end of KS3 compared with 73.6% for the RCT cohort as a whole. At KS2 performance of EAL learners was higher than the RCT cohort as a whole (95% achieving the CSI compared with 82.6%). Pupils within RCT are supported to undertake GCSEs in their home languages recent results are encouraging in 2012 1 secondary school had 6 pupils who undertook GCSE's in 4 languages all attaining A stars. In 2013 11 secondary schools had 59 pupils who undertook GCSE's in 6 languages results included 10A*, 	

KEY QUESTION 1: HOW GOOD ARE OUTCOMES? Quality Indicator: 1.1 Standards Evaluation	Evidence
1.1.4 How Good are Learners' Skills	
<p>Since 2011, KS2 outcomes for reading have improved at a faster rate than for Wales as a whole, with the gap between RCT and All Wales data for 2013 being 0.79 percentage points, compared to 3.54 percentage points in 2011. Improvements in writing skills have been at a slightly lower rate than for Wales with the gap between RCT pupils and the All Wales data now being 2.99 percentage points compared with 2.82 points in 2011.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results from the first year of National reading and numeracy tests indicates that more than 80% of pupils achieved standardised scores of at least 85. The highest being in Welsh (88.7%) and the lowest in numeracy (82.2%). Comparing results to the All Wales data showed a gap of 1.7% for English and Numeracy and 2.0% for Welsh. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance in ICT at KS3 continues to improve at a faster rate than for Wales with the percentage of young people achieving the expected level or above in ICT in 2013 being 87.11% which has enabled us to improve our ranking by 3 places to 16th since 2011. 	
<p>Successful implementation of the Catch Up Literacy programmes have been undertaken in primary schools for a number of years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> During the academic year 2011/12 Rhondda Cynon Taf's central team of basic skills practitioners supported 605 pupils using the Catch Up Literacy intervention in all primary schools. These pupils were identified by their schools as underachieving in literacy. Average reading age gains during the nine months of the Catch Up intervention was 24.7 months which equates to an average ratio gain of 2.74. Professor Greg Brooks in his research paper 'What Works for Children in Wales with Literacy Difficulties' (2009) states an average ratio gain of 2.0 to have a useful educational impact and average ratio gains of 3.0 to have a substantial educational impact. At the end of the intervention period 127 of 601 pupils had increased their reading age to more than their chronological age. For the academic year 2012/13 Catch Up Literacy support is targeted according to the results of the LA reading test data (May 2012). Eighty three schools receive one half day visit from a central team member to support children identified by the test as requiring additional literacy results available December 2013. 	
<p>A variety of specific interventions based on the pupil's need are undertaken with children with additional needs. These have shown significant improvement in basic skills and analysis of achievements against baseline highlights that across all tests 91% of pupils showed improvement (compared with 72% in 2011/12). Outcomes for key programmes have been:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 151 learners with SEN have been the focus of Cumbria Reading Intervention (CRI) with notable gains in reading ages (RA) and spelling ages (SA). The average gains in both reading and spelling ages over a 12 week period were as follows: 2009: RA gains 10.8 months SA gains 9.7 months 2010/11: RA gains 9.8 months SA gains 9.8 months 2011/12: RA gains 11.4 months SA gains 8.92 months 2012/13; RA gains 21.31 months SA gains 9.71 months 	
<p>Services for Young People provide a non-formal curriculum to support young people to improve communication, numeracy and ICT.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> During financial year 2012/13 1,069 young people, an increase of 15% on 2011-12, have gained 1,364 accreditations in literacy, numeracy and ICT skills delivered across a variety of youth settings. The SFYP view point evaluation continues to find that SFYP provision helps 	

improve and develop new skills:

- **40%** of many of our most disengaged and potential NEET young people said that engaging with the Detached Team has helped improve and develop new skills (increase of **2%** based on 2010/11 survey results).
- **46%** of young people engaging in e3+ provision said that it has helped them improve and develop new skills.
- **37%** of young people engaging in DoE provision said that it has helped them improve and develop new skills.
- **36%** of young people engaging with the Curriculum Development & Training Team.

Essential Skills

In 2013 pupils achieved 1,119 essential skills at level 2 – an increase of 28.8% and 827 at level 3 – an increase of 56.9%:

Skill	Level 2	Level 3
Application of Numbers	529	144
Communication	18	654
Information Technology	572	29
	1,119	827

Welsh Bacalaureate

In 2013, 527 young people achieved the Welsh Bacalaureate qualification compared to 507 in 2012.

KEY QUESTION 1: HOW GOOD ARE OUTCOMES?

Quality Indicator: 1.1 Standards
Evaluation

Evidence

1.1.5 How Good are Learners' Welsh Language Skills

First Language Welsh

Learners make good progress in Welsh language skills in Welsh-medium schools, especially within the primary sector.

<p>Foundation Phase</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2013, 84.1% of pupils achieved the required level, or higher in LCW compared to 86.7% nationally. This represents a 1.8 % point improvement on 2012, slightly higher than the all Wales improvement of 0.8 % point. This ranks us 17th out of 20 Authorities. <p>KS2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2013, 84.3% of RCT pupils achieved level 4 or higher in Welsh first language compared to 86.7% nationally. This represents a 1.8 % point improvement on 2011, lower than the all Wales improvement of 4.7 % point. This ranks us 16th out of 20 Authorities. <p>KS3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2013, 85.9% of RCT pupils achieved level 5 or higher in Welsh first language compared to 87.6% nationally. This represents a 14.2 % point improvement on 2011, higher than the all Wales improvement of 6.3 % point, improving our ranking from 18th in 2011 to 12th in 2013 (out of 18 Authorities). <p>Performance at the higher levels are also good with 24.2% achieving outcome level 6+ at FP compared with 29.3% nationally , 29.6% achieving level 5+ at KS2 compared with 30.4% nationally and 40.2% achieving level 6+ at KS3 compared to 45.7%</p> <p>KS4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2013, 67.1% of pupils who entered Welsh 1st language obtained grade A*-C, including 6.8% at A*-A. 69.6% of pupils who entered welsh literature GCSE achieved a grade A*-C, an increase of 4.7% points from 2011. <p>KS5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of pupils sitting Welsh first language is relatively small – in 2013 only 19 entered, the percentage achieving A*-C can vary but for 2013 was 42.1% compared to 74% nationally. 	
<p>Welsh Second Language</p>	
<p>The performance of pupils in Welsh Second language</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> KS3 – 69.6% of RCT pupils achieved the expected level or above in Welsh second language, compared to 73.3% nationally. Although below the all Wales level, since 2011 RCT has improved by 12% points enabling us to close the gap to the national figure. KS4 – 75% of pupils who sat Welsh 2nd language full course achieved grade A*-C – 1.3% points increase on 2011. KS4 – 47.2% of pupils who sat Welsh 2nd language short course achieved grade A*-C - 4.2% points increase on 2011. KS5- 53 pupils sat 'A' level Welsh 2nd language with 69.8% achieving A*-C – a slight decrease on the 76.8% achieving in 2011, although the small cohort size makes trend data less reliable. 	
<p>Transition</p>	
<p>Although there has been a slight decrease in the percentages in 2013, there still remains as a high percentage of transfer between Key Stages 2 and 3 and between Key Stages 3 and 4 within the Welsh-medium sector.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transition rates for key stage 2 to 3 in 2012/13 was 96.3% compared with 97.97% in 2011. The Transition rate for key stage 3 to 4 in 2012/13 was 99.2%. compared with 99.47% in 2011. 	

<p>KEY QUESTION 1: HOW GOOD ARE OUTCOMES? Quality Indicator: 1.2. Wellbeing Evaluation</p>	<p>Evidence</p>
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1.2.1 How Good is the Development of Healthy and Safe Attitudes	
RCT continues to provide children and young people with an extensive, innovative range of provision covering both physical social and emotional wellbeing.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 107 primary schools operate breakfast clubs, this represents 83% of the total schools that could be involved in the initiative and an increase from 73% in 2011/12 This is significantly higher than the 50% target set by the WG with take up is the highest in Wales. • Latest figures indicates that free school meal take up is 71.2% an increase from 67.8% in financial year 2012/13. • The 5x60 programme has a strong track record with 58% of secondary pupils engaging with the programme compared to 54% nationally. Since 2011 work has been ongoing to improve opportunities for pupils attending special schools, with engagement levels now over 80% • The partnership Teenage Pregnancy and Sexual Health Strategy continues to evidence a reduction in teenage mums. In 2012 198 babies were delivered to teenage mums in RCT compared with 277 in 2010 – representing a reduction of 28.5%. Over the same period across Wales there has been a reduction of 22%. • Counselling service through Eye-to-Eye is offered to all secondary age pupils at school and in community facilities with 1,474 pupils and young people receiving counselling in 2012/13 – a slight increase from 1,465 in 2010/11. 83% of those receiving support said it enabled them to cope better at school with 94% stating they would use the counsellor again if required. 90% of schools who responded stated that the counselling had a good or excellent effect on attendance. • The RAISE IT programme, piloted in 2011, is being rolled out across RCT secondary schools, since 2012, 139 young people gaining a nationally recognised accreditation in positive mental health. This programme of issue-based work around positive mental health is sector leading. • Fixed term exclusions relating to bullying remain low with only 11 incidents reported in 2012/13 compared to 28 in 2010/11. • The variety and scope of provision has received positive responses from young people regarding their wellbeing. In the 2013 young people Extending Entitlement Viewpoint Questionnaire, of the 8,837 young people who took part <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 79% reported that their health was generally good, 83% felt safe in their community (80% in 2011), 89% that they found it easy to obtain the information and advice they wanted (88% in 2011). 	

KEY QUESTION 1: HOW GOOD ARE OUTCOMES? Quality Indicator: 1.2 Wellbeing Evaluation	Evidence
1.2.2 How Good is Participation and Enjoyment in Learning	
A comprehensive range of provision is in place to enhance pupils' participation and enjoyment in learning, these have resulted in a low level of exclusions and the local authority's youth service having both high reach and attendance levels. Since 2011 attendance rates in both the primary and secondary sector have improved but due to across school variance overall levels remain low and continues to be a priority area for further improvement.	
School Attendance	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance in our primary schools has improved in 2011/12 by 0.8% . This improvement being higher than for Wales as a whole with the gap narrowing from 1.0% to 0.7%. This progress has improved our ranking to 18th (from 22nd) • Data for 2013 shows that this improving trend is continuing with 2013 attendance being 93.4% and our ranking improving another 2 places to 16th • Since 2011 overall improvement has been 1.1% compared to 0.4% nationally. • Comparing similar schools across Wales shows that the percentage of RCT schools 	

that have attendance rates above the median of their FSM group has improved from 31.26% to 51.35%

Year/Quartile	1	2	3	4	Percentage above Median
2010/11	11.02%	20.34%	28.81%	39.83%	31.36%
2011/12	12.17%	26.09%	31.30%	30.43%	38.26%
2012/13	18.92%	32.43%	31.53%	17.12%	51.35%

- Since 2011 secondary attendance in RCT has improved by 1.3% to 91.9%, slightly more than the improvement for Wales as a whole. The gap between RCT and the Welsh average has narrowed slightly and is now 0.7% although our ranking is still 21st.
- Comparing similar schools across Wales shows that while we have doubled the percentage of schools in the top quartile of their FSM group, the number in the lowest quartile remains too high.

Year/Quartile	1	2	3	4	Percentage above Median
2010/11	10.53%	31.58%	26.32%	31.58%	42.11%
2011/12	10.53%	15.79%	31.58%	42.11%	26.32%
2012/13	21.05%	15.79%	26.32%	36.84%	36.84%

Attendance of Specific Groups

- We currently have 21 pupils Gypsy Traveller families registered in RCT schools. Attendance is monitored weekly with all pupils of statutory primary age having attendance above the WG minimum target of 50%. 4 pupils achieved attendance above 95% for 2012/13. With attendance of secondary age pupils being more of an issue, for academic year 2013 a new scheme has been introduced in partnership with Adult Education to provide a tutoring group for secondary age girls. Although, in its infancy initial reaction has been positive.
- Due to small cohort sizes for ethnic minority pupils trends can vary but for 2013, in secondary schools the lowest attendance came from white pupils and the highest from Chinese/Chinese British. Provisional data for primary schools show similar trends.
- Attendance of pupils eligible for FSM in secondary schools is currently 5.7% below pupils not eligible for FSM. This gap has narrowed since 2011 figure of 6.8%. Unauthorised absence is significantly higher for pupils eligible for FSM 4.4% compared with 1.2%.
- In 2011/12 and 2012/13 attendance in RCT secondary schools has been higher for boys than for girls. The gap in 2013 being 0.3% points, the same as for Wales as a whole. In 2012/13, for the first time girls unauthorised absence rate was higher than for boys.
- Attendance at PRUs varies but all three provisions have made slight improvements since 2011/12.

Exclusions

- First release data highlights that RCT rate of 5 days or fewer within secondary schools has reduced from 89.5 to 82.7 per 1000 pupils. RCT is below the Welsh average in relation to fixed term exclusions 6 days or more per 1000 pupils. RCT is ranked 4th in Wales for the average number of days lost 2.2 compared to 2.5.
- There were 16 permanent exclusions across the Authority in 2012/13, this is the same figure as in 2011.
- Since academic year 2011/12 there has been a decrease in the number of fixed term exclusions from 1,884 to 1,645 – a reduction of 13%. There has also been a

significant decrease in the number of days lost to fixed term exclusion from 4,869 to 3,655 – a decrease of 25%.

- Recent exclusion data highlights a continuation in the downward trend with a further 28% reduction in the number of incidents of exclusion and a 19% reduction in the number of days lost when comparing Autumn Term 2012 with Autumn Term 2013 data.
- During academic year 2012/13 143 pupils accessed the PRU provision. During this time 30 pupils were fully re-integrated into mainstream provision and 35 on a part time basis.

Bullying and Time Out

Termly data relating to incidents of bullying, positive physical intervention and use of time out show improvements over time. These are summarised as follows:

Data	Autumn 2012	Spring 2013	Summer 2013	Autumn 2013	Progress Autumn 2012/2013
Bullying	352	144	81	184	47.7%
Time Out	1869	936	1107	881	52.9%
Positive Physical Intervention	92	58	31	37	59.8%

- Comparison of Autumn 2012 and Autumn 2013 data suggests a reduction of 47.7% in incidents of bullying, 52.9% in the use of time out and 59.8% in positive physical intervention.

Youth Service Attendance and Reach

- SFYP has continued to see good increases in the number of 11 – 19 year olds engaging in provision. The proportion of 11-19 year olds engaging in provision for 2011-12 is up by 12% (based on Welsh Government mid-year population estimate). This equates to 60% of RCT's 11-19 year old population which performs well above the all Wales average of 34% (Source: Welsh Government Statistical Bulletin 2011-12). According to the Welsh Government Statistical Bulletin 2011-12 RCT Services for Young People are ranked as the best performing youth service in Wales with 15,732 individual young people engaged.
- Final evaluation of the BTFT funded element of SFYP E3+ programme found that pupils who attended E3+ provision had higher school attendance than similar pupils who did not attend E3+.

Youth Offending Service

- The latest Youth Justice Board data summary for Rhondda Cynon Taf shows a positive engagement of young offenders in education, training and employment following intervention by the Youth Offending Service
- Young people of statutory schools age increased their hours of engagement by 24.3% compared to 5.9% nationally.
- Young people above statutory school age showed improvement of 17.1% compared with 11.7% nationally
- Both age groups moved from hours of engagement below the national average at the start of intervention to above average at the end.

Engagement in education, training and employment	YOT	South Wales	Wales
<i>Number of yp of statutory school age</i>	54	254	651
<i>Average no. of hrs in ETE per a yp - start</i>	17.1	18.5	19.6
<i>Average no. of hrs in ETE per a yp - end</i>	21.2	20.4	20.8
Percentage change	24.3%	9.9%	5.9%
<i>Number of yp above statutory school age</i>	122	645	1345
<i>Average no. of hrs in ETE per a yp - start</i>	11.6	10.7	12.0
<i>Average no. of hrs in ETE per a yp - end</i>	13.6	13.2	13.4
Percentage change	17.1%	24.1%	11.7%
<i>*good performance is typified by a positive percentage</i>			

KEY QUESTION 1: HOW GOOD ARE OUTCOMES?	
Quality Indicator: 1.2 Wellbeing Evaluation	Evidence
1.2.3 How Good is Community Involvement and Decision-making	
<p>Young people continue to have a sector leading, well developed range of opportunities to have their voices heard and impact on decisions that affect them e.g. biennial extending entitlement questionnaire, budget consultation, development of strategic plans and a range of specialist youth fora. The introduction of youth mayor & deputy mayor enables young people to develop links to and understanding of the Council's work. A variety of participation mechanisms are used to ensure young people of all ages have the opportunity to get involved with decision that affect them. Recent examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team Around the Family (TAF) Young people designed the user friendly version and also interviewed organisations and agencies for the tender for TAF. They have also produced young person friendly versions of the Strengths and Needs cards used for assessments. • Fostering Framework for Wales A number of young people who are looked after in RCT, worked with LAC from other authorities on the new Fostering Framework, which included a various pieces of work. These young people also worked on the development of an online survey tool for young people who are looked after and produced a young person friendly version of the 360 degree framework. One of our young people achieved an award at the LAC Awards in March this year • Single Integrated Plan (SIP) Fframwaith coordinated and undertook the consultation with children and young people. Young people from our safeguarding group (Live Life Right) designed a child and young person friendly version of the SIP for us to consult with other children and young people effectively. The consultation involved primary, secondary and special schools, looked after children residential homes, special interest groups, activity groups and a youth forum. Consultation was also undertaken in Welsh medium settings. • School Organisation School Councils have played a key role in all the statutory consultation exercises on proposals to close a number of primary and secondary schools as well as having input into the appointment process for head and deputy head teachers. 	

KEY QUESTION 2: HOW GOOD IS PROVISION? Quality Indicator: 2.1. How do we evaluate support for school improvement? Evaluation	Evidence
2.1.1 How well do we provide the functions of support, monitoring, challenge and intervention?	
<p>The support for school improvement is provided by the LA in partnership with the Central South Consortium (CSC). In March 2012 support for School Improvement was judged to be adequate by Estyn. However, the report noted that the authority had recently improved its processes to support, challenge and intervene in schools. Since then the LA has with the CSC further improved its level of challenge to schools, especially where there are leadership and management issues leading to under performance. The LA in close co-operation with the system leaders (SL) of the CSC provides robust support and challenge in all sectors, underpinned by strong working relationships and effective communication with schools. Nearly all Headteachers are responding positively and self-critically to the changed climate, the RCT/CSC Ambition, and are setting more ambitious targets that if achieved, will significantly improve outcomes in 2014.</p> <p>In our 2012/13 school perception survey 78% of schools ranked the Council's effectiveness in challenging their school to perform better as good or very good – an increase from 69% in 2011.</p> <p>66% ranked the Council's effectiveness in supporting schools to use pupil performance data to secure school improvement as good or very good – a slight drop from 68% in 2011.</p> <p>Since 2012, good progress has been made on effectively utilising data and developing differentiated support to target underperforming schools, it is acknowledged that this process is ongoing and the momentum of the RCT/CSC Ambition needs to be maintained to embed progress and improve outcomes consistently within and across all schools. The strong culture of challenge required to sustain improvement is supported by the direct engagement of the Director and heads of achievement and is having a positive impact on standards of attainment in schools.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The LA school partnership agreement has been updated to reflect the expectations of the LA and CSC and clearly sets out the level of challenge, support and intervention which schools can expect to receive. The document outlines clearly the respective responsibilities of governors, schools and the LA. • Working with the CSC, the LA has developed criteria for categorising schools that are sharp and clear. Schools understand the criteria for categorisation and the associated differentiated levels of monitoring and support. • The level of support is determined by a clear process based on sound data analysis and information from school visit reports and a wide range of service areas. • Under the leadership of the Director robust action, including the wise use of LA powers, has been taken where required. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of leadership and management in schools is recognised as key to high performing schools and is one of the main areas that is addressed and reported on within the Annual Performance Reports (APR). This evidenced view arises from sound data analysis, SL contact during visits and school reviews. The quality of leadership is also included as an important feature in the school categorisation analysis. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular meetings between the LA heads of achievement and their respective senior system leaders (SSL's) alongside regular systematic and planned meetings with the SL teams, support the development of strong working relationships. This regular contact enables a deep knowledge and understanding of schools to develop and identify emerging issues and concerns to be raised. A feature of the secondary meetings is the school by school 'clinics' to discuss 	

<p>progress and barriers to improvement. At regular meetings Systems Leaders are also given the opportunity to discuss specific LA arrangements for example in relation to attendance and HR. There are many examples of extended joint working in schools and joint visits to schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In addition to these meetings information from other service areas, such as that for attendance and exclusions, feed into the CSC to identify schools where there is good practice or concern. This has further led to case conferences in which HR, Finance, School Improvement, Access & Inclusion, Attendance & Wellbeing Officers and SL's discuss specific schools and identify action points for improvement with timescales. • A new process of leadership reviews and mid cycle reviews in secondary schools is in place and will continue to include members of Access & Inclusion as key components of the review team. Within primary schools, members of Access and Inclusion play a key role in mid-cycle reviews in particular where there are LA resources classes at the school. Buildings maintenance issues are also included where appropriate as part of primary school reviews. Reviews in primary schools are also triggered by concerns raised in case conferences. • Specific challenge and support for band 4 and band 5 schools has been commissioned by the LA from a small group of highly effective Headteachers with indications of positive impact. • Challenging targets have been set for KS3 and kS4 performance and agreed with all schools. These reflect the significant change in the culture of aspiration and expectation that has arisen from the setting of the RCT/CSC Ambition and personal involvement by the Director. No secondary school is targeting less than the FFT 'D' estimates for key performance measures for 2014. Primary schools are expected to set targets wither above the median for their benchmark group or at FFT 'D' estimate whichever is higher. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CSC APR for 2013 has been revised and now incorporates a wide range of powerful data analyses to support the growing data literacy of school governors. These changes also enable a more robust challenge to schools in raising expectations. The Director of Education and Lifelong Learning and the heads of achievement quality assure all reports before they are shared with schools. • The LA school improvement approach is focused on the authority school strategy. This well publicised strategy identifies six key elements for attention by the CSC/LA and schools. School improvement initiatives being developed within the LA are all closely associated with elements of the strategy. Some examples would be the Outstanding Teacher Programme allied to the use of the latest (IRIS) technology to support the dissemination of great practice within and between schools (element 3) and the bespoke, graduated leadership programmes for leadership at all levels (element 1). New work in secondary schools since 2012 has targeted improvement in the core subjects through intensive challenge and support programmes with core subject leaders. The focus in primary schools has been on developing capacity for improving literacy and identifying challenge and support for new HTs, DHTs and middle leaders. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of data by LA Officers and SL's is good and is good or improving in all schools. • Schools are provided with access to a wide range of relevant performance, value added, benchmarking and other comparative data sets that are complemented by the provision of additional data analyses to support schools in evaluating the performance of particular groups. Good progress is being made in developing a web-based school portal that will significantly improve immediate access to data and shared judgements about strengths and weaknesses. • Analysis of school and authority data is undertaken by the Director, heads of achievement and SL's over the summer break and in the autumn term so that priorities for improvement are identified early in the year and prior to link visits so that robust and informed discussions take place. This consequently informs the target setting process and enables SL's to challenge expectations where these are inappropriate. 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For the last two years secondary schools have been expected to return at four intervals over the year, their predictions of the proportion of pupils currently secure to achieve qualifications for key performance measures at KS4. This has focused attention on trajectories of progress and the quality of assessment and intervention. All schools now have access to the latest SIMS tracking modules such as Discover. In order to focus attention on significant LA performance issues the LA has required schools to submit targets for the proportion of pupils making 2 levels of progress at key stage three and for closing gaps relating to gender and FSM/NFSM at both KS3 and KS4. The LA tracking system within primary schools allows the LA to track progress year on year within KS2 and challenge HTs where progress is weak 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the case of primary schools identified as underperforming through categorisation and or reviews the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning and Senior Officers meet with the Head Teacher and Chair of Governors to outline strategy to secure improvements. Headteachers are expected to demonstrate good progress of groups of pupils during these meetings and are also challenged to ensure all teaching in their schools is at least good. The Director of Education and Lifelong Learning meets with the Head Teachers and Chair of Governors of all secondary schools with the same remit. This has resulted in a number of changes in management being made. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The financial position of each school is monitored quarterly by the Education Senior Management Team. The Director of Education and Lifelong Learning wrote to a number of schools that are projected to be in a deficit position requesting a recovery plan to be submitted. This was followed-up by visits from Corporate Finance to support the Head Teachers to make the required changes. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Director of Education and Lifelong Learning writes to all secondary school Headteachers, immediately after the KS4 results are published, summarising their performance and in some instances asking specific questions on their performance. Following the 2012 results, five schools were identified as requiring warning letters. Following the 2013 outcomes all these schools had shown improvements, some significantly so. Three of these schools had their warning letters removed and two schools were reissued with warning letters where progress was deemed to be insufficient. Two further schools were notified that they would be subject to warning letters. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a systematic and well planned series of meetings between the LA and primary and secondary Headteachers which focus on school improvement. All secondary Headteachers meet regularly with each other and with LA Officers and groups have been established to work on agreed priorities such as improving standards in mathematics; improving ICT infrastructure: research and develop consistent practice for the more able and talented learners; school development plans/self-evaluation and to review the HR Competency Policy. The Primary Head Teachers' School Improvement Group is focused on Estyn thematic and remit report priorities; more able and talented learners, assessment reporting and recording, pupil tracking and progression of skills and literacy. The group divides into smaller working parties for example the Literacy working party were key drivers in supporting the LA literacy reviews during Spring/Summer 2013. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council works well with the CSC to provide in-depth review and support to specific schools and additional support has been provided by others, such as the small group of experienced secondary Headteachers working as system leaders within the LA. This has enabled both the quantum of support, pace and depth of the reviews to increase as well as providing the opportunity to internal LA staff, such as those from attendance and behaviour teams, to gain experience and learn from good practice. To drive and challenge Headteachers within primary schools to increase the pace of change, the LA has secured the services of experienced Headteachers to support CSC system leaders in schools where there is most concern. Regular 	

<p>contact is made between all personnel working to support and challenge schools and HTs and senior staff have benefitted from this approach.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The use of data to drive service improvement within schools and across schools in RCT is one of 4 Cabinet priorities for education. As a result, with the support of Corporate ICT and using other expertise from across the Council, a dedicated team has been put together to improve the quality and range of data available to schools. This includes introducing consistent pupil tracking data systems, improving the data infrastructure, simplifying data collection approaches through automation and ensuring the information available is timely, consistent and accurate and in line with consortium expectations. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a result of guidance provided by LA Officers at Headteachers' seminars and during link visits, significant progress has been made by most schools in improving self-evaluation processes. With the majority of schools inspected in the current cycle being judged good or better in KQ3.2, it is recognised that there is further work required to improve consistency across all schools. The quality of most schools' self-evaluation appropriately identifies strengths and areas for improvement and a recent review of all secondary school improvement plans along with recent guidance from the LA and CSC brings further cohesion between a school's SDP and SER. Early indications are demonstrating that this has been a successful exercise and will help make all schools in the LA more focused on a small number of key priorities in order to raise standards. A similar approach is being rolled out in primary schools using identified good practice leaders to support where there are weaknesses. Despite the significant improvements in procedures referred to above, too many primary and secondary schools are being identified as requiring follow-up monitoring as a result of inspection. Where schools are placed in a follow-up activity, the Head Teacher and chair of governors meet with the cabinet member for education, Director and senior officers to present and discuss their post inspection action plan, regular reports are made on progress and nearly all schools are removed from follow-up activities quickly. Where schools have not been successful in being removed, there have been serious leadership concerns and the LA has worked with governors and union bodies to address the issues. 	

KEY QUESTION 2: HOW GOOD IS PROVISION? Quality Indicator: 2.1. How do we evaluate support for school improvement? Evaluation	Evidence
2.1.2 How effective are we in raising standards in priority areas, including curriculum support?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where there are particular concerns over performance, the LA takes action to meet the identified challenges, as for example the work to improve standards in mathematics and English in secondary schools. The LA directs the work of the CSC intervention team to support weaker mathematics and English departments. More recently resources from Education London have been directed to those mathematics and English departments with the greatest need. There are intensive programmes of support for the leaders of English and mathematics departments. Outcomes across the LA improved in all core subjects in 2013; progress of 2 levels at KS3 increased significantly. The CSC intervention team has been tasked to work within 3 primary clusters for mathematics – these clusters identified for their overall low performance at the end of key stage 2, further intervention is being targeted at 6 low performing schools, over 50 schools are receiving catch-up numeracy support during 2012/13 – targeted through national Numeracy tests. A similar number of primary schools receive catch-up literacy support and the LA has commissioned CSC to target the 7 weakest schools in respect of literacy through a specific whole school programme. Outcomes across the LA improved in all core subjects in 2013. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The LA is committed to raising standards in literacy and consequently developed 	

<p>a Literacy Strategy which crosses all service areas. Reports on progress against actions in this strategy are presented to scrutiny twice a year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The focus on raising standards of literacy in primary schools during 2012/13 was underpinned by an extensive training programme for all primary school teachers and additional practitioners, Key Stage 3 literacy coordinators were also trained as were members of Communities First teams and family learning tutors. Nearly all primary schools were subject to literacy reviews during the spring and summer terms 2013 and subsequent support from CSC Literacy team and Welsh in Education officers have used these reports to target support and provide further training for specific schools. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The LA has commissioned the highly regarded Outstanding Teacher and Improving Teacher Programmes (OTP ITP) for all secondary schools. The LA has also financed the IRIS tool that uses the latest video technology to support the dissemination of developing great practice from OTP and ITP across and between schools. The IRIS technology will be supported by the ICT infrastructure developments within the LA. This is a good example of strategically linked projects. During spring and summer of 2014 the programme will roll out across all primary clusters. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foundation Phase support and challenge is commissioned through CSC although during 2012/13, the support for schools was targeted by the LA at Literacy. The head of achievement or her representative attends AWFPA meetings in order to ensure that appropriate messages are fed back to schools. The LA Family learning officer sits on the Pori Drwy Stori working groups and she liaises with the head of achievement to development this strategy across schools and communities. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stronger links have been developed with Communities First partnerships, regular meetings have been held with the head of achievement (primary) and community first managers to develop match-funding projects and other programmes which directly support schools and their communities to raise standards of learners. Communities First managers use the same well-being evaluation tool to baseline and evaluate progress of their programmes. 	
<p>The 14-19 network has enabled the extension of curricula provision (including developing the MAT agenda) which has impacted on improved outcomes at KS4 and KS5.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The network has ensured that all providers meet the requirements of the skill measures with all schools offering more than 28 choices. Extending the provision has included a full range of vocational courses which has seen the staying on rate for RCT increasing at a faster rate than for Wales. This position will now be influenced by the recent opening of new College facilities at Nantgarw. The development of good working relationships has resulted in schools being supported by specialist organisations to deliver a broader range of activities including; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ELITE pathways and Step Up programmes for pupils with additional learning needs Level 1 Construction course for pupils at risk of disengaging from learning. A series of workshops for more able and talented pupils including the successful venture to Mission Discovery at Kings College London. A programme of training has been developed for teachers to ensure that they are skilled in the delivery of new qualifications and have the opportunity to share best practice with colleagues. There are regular meetings with curriculum deputies and of the WBQ network to inform strategy and give direction. To assist schools in meeting the requirements in relation to support for learners, 14-19 funding was matched to the BTFT Youth Coach intervention strand to provide learning coaches to ensure that all secondary schools in RCT meet the 	

target of 1 coach to every 80 pupils.

- 14-19 extra-curricular activity such as the 14-19 Creative and Cultural Industries programme delivered by Cultural Services' Youth Arts Team and the 3rd sector with input from professionals from industry.

KEY QUESTION 2: HOW GOOD IS PROVISION? Quality Indicator: 2.1. How do we evaluate support for school improvement? Evaluation	Evidence
2.1.4 How well do we provide support for school leadership, management and governance?	
<p>There is good support for school leadership and governance with a wide-ranging leadership development programme available for leaders and managers at all levels. The provision was judged as good in the previous inspection. The programmes contribute positively to succession planning for the benefit of the LA and its schools and to improving the overall quality of leadership.</p> <p>Strengths and areas for improvement in aspects of senior and middle leadership and management are identified robustly and accurately and inform targeted support and challenge. Where there is underperformance of leadership the Director or his representative has worked with the chair of governors and Headteacher, with effective HR support, to produce a robust support plan. In some primary school cases the support plan has included assistance from mentor Headteachers.</p> <p>Through the writing of LA/CSC school leadership review reports and in the writing of the APR, clear links are made between the quality of leadership and standards of achievement. Intervention in a number of schools has improved the quality of leadership and its impact on standards.</p> <p>The LA/CSC procedures for the categorisation of schools contain explicit criteria to inform judgements on the effectiveness of leadership. These play a significant part in determining a school's needs as set out in a statement of action.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A comprehensive induction programme is run for all new Headteachers, both acting and substantive, New Headteachers are involved in networks with a mentor Head Teacher and have access to specific training opportunities. Coaching support has been provided to mentor Headteachers to support this work. • LiNKS and the LA provide together a progressive and complimentary leadership development programmes. • Support of very good quality is provided for senior leaders who aspire to headship in the near future. The LA has commissioned a high level leadership development programme for leaders of the future. This programme whilst linking to national leadership standards focuses on challenging aspiring leaders to reflect on and develop key elements of their own leadership skills. Teachers have applied for this programme using a similar application form to NPQH. From the first cohort of 17 (10 primary, 7 secondary) the LA has seconded 5 primary leaders to support in struggling schools, another member of the primary group has secured a deputy headship. A second cohort has commenced this academic year. • For both primary and secondary colleagues, modular courses of high quality are available to middle leaders who wish to move to senior leadership and for teachers who wish to improve their middle leadership capacity. These courses are linked to leadership standards and also challenge teachers to reflect on their own skills and how these can be further developed. • There are well attended programmes for heads of core subjects that address their key leadership and management competencies alongside approaches to raising the bar and closing the gaps in performance. • The LA and LiNKS both provide a range of opportunities and mechanisms for leaders and managers to develop knowledge and share good practice to ensure they are informed about national and local issues. e.g. the joint closure day for 	

<p>secondary schools and the literacy programme for primary schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within termly primary Headteacher meetings time is spent discussing national priorities, sharing good practice and challenging aspirations. • A programme of leadership seminars are held regularly for senior leaders in secondary schools. Topics have included self-evaluation, attendance and a range of inclusion, learning and teaching approaches. • A series of programmes involving the leads on attendance and behaviour from secondary schools has involved discussion of LA strategy, good practice exemplars and opportunities for networking and the sharing of good practice. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A comprehensive service providing clerking to the Governing Body plus support in managing school finance and other aspects of school management is offered to all schools. Take-up amongst primary schools is high, with only 1 of 117 not participating. Most of our secondary schools also purchase at least the basic level of service with a third purchasing the full clerking service. 	
<p>The Governor Support Service provides a range of services for schools to support the management needs of governors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All new governors are provided with a comprehensive introductory pack and receive induction training sessions. • There is a termly training programme based on the Authority's priorities for improvement and governor feedback. • Agreements have been set up with neighbouring Authorities for governors to attend training in the Authority in which they live if preferred. <p>During academic year 2012/13 77 training courses were run for Governors with 319 attendees.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory governor training for new governors, chairpersons and clerks was introduced by Welsh Government in September 2013, by January 2014 all clerk training had been completed and by the end of the Spring term 2014 over 95% of all the statutory training had been successfully completed with feedback being extremely positive. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governor vacancies within the Authority currently stand at 11%; while this level is still viewed as high it has fallen 3% since the last inspection. This has been a result of awareness raising including re-vamping the webpage and training opportunities as well as promoting the service in Council open days. We continue to work towards promoting governorship in our schools to reduce the vacancy levels year on year. In some areas opportunities have been taken to federate Governing Bodies to reduce vacancy levels. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Annual Report to governors provides comprehensive information on school performance both attainment and financial as well as utilising the WG core data sets and benchmarking quartiles to provide comparative data. Training sessions on understanding this data and how to utilise it to challenge outcomes to improve have been developed and form part of the training available to governors. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since the introduction of legislation regarding the federation of School Governing Bodies in 2010, we have actively promoted this issue where it appears that 'paired' schools would be suitable for this model of governance, and where the introduction of such arrangements can bring tangible benefits with respect to the leadership and management of schools. Two small schools, located in the same village just 1/2 mile apart have federated successfully and the new Executive Headteacher of the school takes up post in January 2014. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three pairs of schools have now federated, with a further pair currently undertaking the necessary consultation. 	

<p>KEY QUESTION 2: HOW GOOD IS PROVISION?</p> <p>Quality Indicator: 2.2. How do we evaluate support for additional learning needs and educational inclusion?</p> <p>Evaluation</p>	<p>Evidence</p>
<p>2.2.1 How well do we meet statutory obligations in respect of children and young</p>	

<p>School Improvement LA initiative to identify and improve support for children with speech language difficulties was piloted in May and launched in June 2013. 36 schools are currently involved; the project will be rolled out across all RCT schools over a 3 year period. 1175 children have been assessed to date: 128 pupils have been identified with moderate to severe difficulties, 267 pupils mild to moderate difficulties, 99 intervention groups have been established. 124 members of school staff have been trained to use the SpeechLink assessment tool 25 members of staff have received ELKLAN training and 72 consultation visits have been undertaken by the Learning Support Service. Reassessment to be undertaken in May 2014 to evaluate effectiveness of interventions and pupil outcomes.</p>	
<p>Education services have a good working relationship with a range of other professionals from children's services and health to ensure that the needs of learners with more complex needs are met. This includes work around out-of-county placements, provision of speech and language therapy in specialist settings, provision for disabled children, fostering and adoption. All Children's Services LAC panels have Education representatives. A new SLA has been negotiated with SALT service to ensure a good level of provision in specialist settings.</p>	
<p>The Authority has a well established and robust managed moves protocol between schools and cross LA borders to support learners at risk of permanent exclusion or to re-integrate those who have been permanently excluded. Exclusion data report and support and challenge visits show clear improvements in fixed term exclusions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fixed term exclusion data suggests that significant improvements were made over 2011/12 and 2012/13. There has been a 13% reduction in fixed term exclusion and 25% reduction in the number of days lost. • An increase in the number of permanent exclusion was evident during 2012/13 but these were for very serious incidents. • The percentage of pupils receiving FSM that have been excluded has reduced from 43.68% (2011/12) to 42.55% (2012/13). • The percentage of LAC pupils being excluded per 1000 pupils decreased from 80.54% in 2010/11 to 76.40% in 2011/12 and 78.72% in 2012/13. • Recent exclusion data highlights a continuation in the downward trend with a further 28% reduction in the number of incidents of exclusion and a 19% reduction in the number of days lost when comparing Autumn Term 2012 with Autumn Term 2013 data. 	
<p>Data for 2012/13 from the Behaviour Support Service suggest that specialist staff involvement brings about positive change in 56% of cases within an average of 3 sessions. For LAC 66% of pupils showed improvements in behaviour following LAC BSA involvement on post intervention measures. A service review is currently being undertaken to investigate new models of LA service delivery. Proposals for delegation of behaviour support funding out to schools and new models for service delivery will be out for consultation shortly.</p>	
<p>EP Service works closely with Cwm Taf Portage Service. This service provides early support and intervention for pre-school pupils with SEN. An Early Years Forum was established in September 2013 and close links are now evident with the Early Years Service. Co-ordination of services around our younger children supports early intervention and prompt support to meet emerging needs.</p>	
<p>Children and young people in RCT have benefited from additional funding from various sources to ensure that they and their families have the provision that is needed for their additional learning needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VIVA Transition Project works with all mainstream and special schools in RCT • RCT People First, Count Me In project provides 1-1 advocacy support for people with high and complex needs. • SNAP Cymru Encouraging Partnership, Listening to Children, Giving families voice. • VALREC • Team Around the Family Panel <p>All promote and advocate inclusion of all young people within RCT through the various projects that they run with a strong emphasis on Learner Voice to influence service</p>	

<p>delivery.</p>	
<p>The WG ASD grant is managed through Fframwaith and has secured additional WG funding for key working. Through this we have</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved access to information for families of children / young people with ASD, a directory of services has been developed and distributed to families, schools, family care and network, health services and ASD parent groups. • RCT ASD Strategic Group has taken the regional lead on developing an information pack for parents to be offered to families at the point of diagnosis. • Parents/carers have been involved at all stages of developing the ASD post-diagnostic pack for children including decision-making about content and format of the pack through attendance at workshops and via email correspondence. • Training for parents/carers of children and young people with ASD. • Training of staff to provide an Early Bird and Early Bird Plus service – the Early Bird service is currently providing three programmes per year with a maximum of 12 families attending each programme. • 100% of parents/carers who attended the Early Bird Training rated the course as being very helpful or helpful in enabling them to meet the needs of their child. • Scoping exercise with parents has been completed and favourable feedback received. Post diagnostic information pack is completed and will be launched in March 2012. • There are currently two transition workers who support young people with a Learning Disability who have complex needs and/or challenging behaviour. Support is provided between secondary school and FE/HE into adult services. 	
<p>The LA has 10 accredited Team Teach trainers and provides training to schools and PRUs. Access and Inclusion has developed guidance to schools on positive physical intervention and has established processes for collecting data from schools. Incidents have reduced over the academic year from Autumn Term 2012 - 92, Spring Term 2013 - 58 and Summer Term 2013 - 31. Support and challenge visits undertaken in relation to positive physical intervention resulted in a reduction in incidents in all the settings visited.</p>	

<p>KEY QUESTION 2: HOW GOOD IS PROVISION? Quality Indicator: 2.2. How do we evaluate support for additional learning needs and educational inclusion? Evaluation</p>	<p>Evidence</p>
<p>2.2.4 How well do we work with parents and carers of children and young people with ALN?</p>	
<p>The Authority has a low number of appeals to SENTW (3 in 2012/13). This is a reflection of good working relationships with parent/carers and SNAP Cymru. A wide range of literature explaining the statutory process and services is available and parents are informed of a named contact to speak to for further discussions as required. A specialist EP provides intensive support for parents who are facing challenges related to their child's needs</p>	
<p>Excellent support is provided by the LAC psychologists (Senior Practitioner/EP) for foster carers. This includes a 12 week training programme based on the Solihull Approach on issues relating to attachment which has been exceptionally well received. 12 foster carers were targeted in Spring Term 2013. 100% of attendees felt the programme had: helped them to understand their foster child better and helped to identify changes they would wish to make in order to better support their child. Access and Inclusion are involved on Adoption Panels and Operational Placement Panel with Children's Services.</p>	
<p>Support for parents of learners with Aspergers and Autism is good across the Authority. A robust multi-agency ASD strategy has been written in consultation with a range of professionals and parent/carers.</p>	
<p>Workshops for parents of school children with sensory impairments are held by members of the Learning Support Service Sensory Support Team across RCT 3 times during the academic year. Sessions provide an opportunity for parents to share experiences, gather advice and support from specialist staff.</p>	
<p>Anti-bullying data is collated and a report distributed termly. Concerning data is followed up with a support and challenge visit to schools. Data returns relating to incidents of</p>	

bullying indicate a dramatic reduction during the last academic year (Autumn Term – 352, Spring Term 144 and Summer Term 81). When comparing Autumn Term 12 and Autumn Term 13 data there has been: 60% reduction in the number of incidents of bullying within primary schools, 43.1% reduction in secondary schools and 50% reduction in special/PRU settings.	
The RCT ASD Steering group includes three parent / carer representatives, all of whom provide personal input to the group in addition to representing local parent/carer groups. There are three parent carer support groups across RCT. ASD strategy funding has been deployed to fund some of the groups to enhance the wellbeing of their children.	
Professional focus groups are held to ensure all partner agency views are captured and taken into account when reviewing and planning service delivery. Following an evaluation of participation in parental focus groups it was felt that to extend reach in capturing parental views a change in practice was needed. A feedback questionnaire is now sent directly to a cross section of parents for evaluation of service delivery.	
On referral to A & I parents are asked to comment on their child's needs. This information is invaluable and actively encouraged. The EPS uses consultation frameworks devised to structure joint school meetings where parental input is key.	

KEY QUESTION 2: HOW GOOD IS PROVISION? Quality Indicator: 2.3. How do we evaluate the promotion of social inclusion and wellbeing? Evaluation	Evidence
2.3.1 How well do we work to promote social inclusion and wellbeing of all children and young people, including healthy lifestyle choices, behaviour, anti-bullying, preventing exclusion and education otherwise than at school (EOTAS)?	
<p>A Wellbeing in Education was launched in January 2014 which is a project aimed at promoting the capacity of schools to audit the wellbeing of learners at an individual, class and whole school level. Data is used to inform collaborative work between schools and the Access and Inclusion Service staff and to jointly agree interventions to bring about change. A total of 26 selected schools are involved and project outcomes will be evaluated in July 2014. The project will be evaluated in conjunction with Sussex University.</p> <p>The LA has devised a new Wellbeing and Behaviour Strategy to ensure that there is a co-ordinated approach to promoting wellbeing across the Education and Lifelong Learning Directorate. Outcomes will be rigorously evaluated post strategy implementation.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted provision is available for the more vulnerable groups through E3+ • Work continues with all young people through youth clubs and detached youth workers although this service area is currently subject to changes following public consultation. • SFYP provides a sector leading service which has been recognised nationally. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 67 individuals/groups were submitted into National Awards such as CLIC Awards, MJ Awards, RCT Sport Awards, WCVA Awards, WG Youth Excellence Awards – resulting in 4 receiving 1st place (winners) awards including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ WG Outstanding Community Project Award 2012 – SFYP Food Freeway ▪ WG Award Outstanding contribution to Developing New Skills for Young People 2012 – www.wicid.tv ▪ National Police and Community Award 2012 – RCT Street Based team – Emotion Behind the Commotion ▪ Young Enterprise Wales Company Awards: Aberdare Girls School Turnaround. • The proposed restructure will enable the service to build on this sector leading work but provide better value for money and more targeted support for the more vulnerable young people. • RCTs Anti-bullying strategy is now well established. Bullying data is collated from schools and PRUs on a termly basis. Based on the findings/trends of the data a 	

<p>number of schools are further audited and visited to identify areas of concern and good practice. When comparing Autumn Term 12 and Autumn Term 13 data there has been: 60% reduction in the number of incidents of bullying within primary schools, 43.1% reduction in secondary schools and 50% reduction in special/PRU settings. Additionally there has been a 50% reduction in the number of incidents of bullying reported relating to race, religion and culture in secondary schools and 33% reduction in primary schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access and Inclusion Service has made significant progress in relation to the collation and interrogation of data (e.g. time out, exclusion, use of positive physical intervention and bullying). Termly reports are produced and support and challenge provided. This has resulted in significant improvements. When comparing Autumn Term 12 and Autumn Term 13 data there has been 100% reduction in the use of time out rooms with primary schools, 43.3% reduction in secondary schools and 98.08% reduction in special/PRU settings. It is also noted that there has been a 70.97% reduction in the use of positive restraint in primary schools, 75% in secondary schools and 50.94% in special/PRU settings. 87% of schools receiving support and challenge visits have reduced data returns. • Training in Restorative Approaches has been provided for all secondary school wellbeing co-ordinators, SENCos and LSAs. Further training and a pilot is planned for 2014. • During June 2013 schools were requested to complete a questionnaire regarding the use of Social Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) within their school. 32 schools responded to the survey. Schools were asked to comment and rate a series of questions, Whilst the number of responses was low it is evident that those schools using the initiative are finding it very useful. Of the returns received: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 68% schools recorded a noticeable impact on children’s understanding of their feelings and ability to manage them • 63% schools recorded a noticeable impact on children’s learning behaviours • 22% recorded considerable and 17 schools recorded a noticeable impact on children’s relationship with each other • 72% school have an identified SEAL co-ordinator. • Since June 2011, Access and Inclusion Service staff have trained 113 members of staff and 54 schools on Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA) training. All are now trained to deliver group emotional literacy interventions. Training has been very positively evaluated and RCT staff will be involved in delivering consortia wide ELSA training in 2014. • RCT contributes to a consortia wide wellbeing forum aimed at sharing good practice, resources and developing training for all 5 LAs. An Education and Lifelong Learning Wellbeing Forum has also been established. • 8 Behaviour Audits have been undertaken in secondary schools to establish good practice and to inform LA behaviour strategy. Feedback has been provided to the Pastoral Heads Group by the Head of BSS. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities First have an excellent track record of delivering projects and activities which promote social inclusion and well being of children and young people. • There continues to be a wide range of targeted services provided by Communities First which includes many projects jointly funded with schools utilising the Pupil Deprivation Grant. 	
<p>LAC Outcome Board meets termly to discuss LAC pupil data. The LAC Education Co-ordinators works with partner agencies to ensure LAC pupils are appropriately placed and their educational needs are met.</p> <p>5 Behaviour Support Assistants and 1 Learning Support Assistant provides targeted support to LAC pupils. In 2012/13, 61 pupils were supported, 103 targets were set of which 96% had an improved rating.</p> <p>PEPs completed within 20 school days of a pupil entering the care system/changing schools during the year has improved. Trend data shows improvement (2011/12 -</p>	

70.89% and 2012/13 – 72.08%).	
Access and Inclusion Service actively participate in Child Practice Reviews and Practitioner Forums ensuring lessons learnt are shared with multi agency partners. An education representative sits on Quality Assurance Standards Group (QASG) and undertakes joint audits with Safeguarding Co-ordinator where there are safeguarding concerns. Representative attend various multi agency safeguarding groups including: Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), Operational Committee, Cwm Taf Childrens Safeguarding Board (CTSCB),etc	
A representative from EPS works closely with YOS and the Youth Bureau. EP time is allocated to develop preventative strategies in work with young people. Following the successful pilot monthly consultation meetings are held with YOS case managers to enhance use of appropriate interventions such as solution orientated techniques, motivational interviewing and personal contracts psychology. These strategies were shown in the evaluation of the pilot to have a positive impact on the effectiveness of the YOS case managers in supporting young offenders.	
Through its referrals from schools the Access & Inclusion Service provides targeted intervention to assess the performance and needs of specific groups of vulnerable pupils and where appropriate provide regular support from specialist teachers/learning support assistants. Evidence of impact is monitored through progress from baseline assessment to re-assessment and progress against specific individual agreed targets. Pupils with Specific Learning Difficulties achieve 82% of Specialist Intervention Programmes (SIPS), Speech & Language supported pupils achieve 69% of SIPS, Visually Impaired and Hearing Impaired pupils achieve 73% of SIPS respectively.	
The Multi Ethnic Achievement Grant is well utilised to target literacy support of EAL learners to improve access to the curriculum and engagement with the wider community. In 2013/14, 12 Show Racism the Red Card workshops have been provided to RCT schools to promote social inclusion and wellbeing of minority ethnic group learners 911 were provided in 2012/13).	
Semi-structured interviews with pupils who received intervention from the Access and Inclusion Service suggest that 98% of children and young people felt things had improved since receiving support (increase of 8% when compared to last academic year result of 90%).	
The Authority has a strong track record of promoting and encouraging children and young people to participate in a wide range of musical activities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 4 Counties courses and Workshop days 2012-2013 - 116 participants ▪ RCT Weekly ensembles 2012-2013 - 363 participants ▪ RCT day courses 2012-2013 - 174 participants ▪ ABRSM Examinations 2011-2012 - 273 participants ▪ ABRSM Examinations 2012-2013 - 313 participants. 	
RCT Theatres continue to provide opportunities for children, young people and their families to enjoy a range of professional live arts experiences.	
The School Nursing Service contributes to the delivery of PSE/SRE programmes in schools delivering sessions related to sexual health, healthy eating, smoking, self-esteem/ body image, etc. Smoking cessation groups have been held in schools in conjunction with Stop Smoking Wales and Smoke Bugs will be piloted in primary schools in the new year.	

KEY QUESTION 2: HOW GOOD IS PROVISION?	
Quality Indicator: 2.3. How do we evaluate the promotion of social inclusion and wellbeing?	
Evaluation	Evidence
2.3.2 How well do we promote attendance and keep children and young people in education, employment and training?	
The Authority has always recognised the importance of promoting school attendance and since the Estyn Inspection in March 2012 there has been significant changes in the Authority's approach to improving attendance.	
RCT Schools Attendance Strategy is effectively embedded across services and schools. Improvements in the use of data to compare and challenge levels of attendance in	

schools has led to improvements in both Primary and Secondary. Improving attendance is a specific action within the Single Integrated Plan within the Prosperity theme and as such is an identified priority for all services. It is also identified as a priority in Canopi Locality Action Plans and Communities First Plans. The AWS liaises effectively with and co-ordinates between a range of services in order to support their contribution to the attendance priority.

The School Attendance Toolkit was reviewed and updated in September 2013 to reflect service developments and all schools have updated school attendance policies in place.

We have secured an RCT lead in developing a CSC approach to improving attendance with a member of AWS seconded to undertake this co-ordination role. The Strategy and Toolkit have been shared as good practice with the other four LA's.

All actions within the Scrutiny Working Group on Attendance Report have been completed and regular reports on school attendance rates and the performance of the AWS are presented to Education Scrutiny on a termly basis.

A range of successful interventions have been introduced and rolled out in line with identified needs. Specific interventions include, 'Super Attender' Challenge in Primary schools, Meet and Greet sessions, Target Groups, Supermarket Swoops. All AWS interventions were reviewed in June 2013 and revisions made to improve and standardise the activity.

During 2012/13 Data Response Visits were piloted in primary schools as a means of formally recording the advice and guidance on attendance matters given to schools by the AWS as well as evidencing the provision of tailored support to individual schools in addition to the case management of referrals. As a means of jointly troubleshooting issues that are negatively impacting on school attendance levels Data Response Visits have been rolled out from October 2013 to all schools where a dip in expected performance has been identified by the half termly data analysis report or where schools have requested one. 51 DRV's were undertaken in primary schools in 2012/13.

The AWS have strong working relationships with schools and other agencies such as the police and the courts. Three truancy patrols a year are supported by South Wales Police, 64 pupils identified through truancy patrols in academic year 2012-13. RCT lead the planning for the annual Valley Line Truancy Patrol every December in partnership with British Transport Police and neighbouring EWS services. In December 2012 232 school age children and young people were approached, 43 of which were RCT pupils.

RCT has clear procedures in place for instigating statutory interventions and applies these procedures, overseen by AWS Team Leaders, to ensure the use of legal powers is appropriate and consistent and that our legal responsibilities are met. RCT has a monthly attendance court at Pontypridd Magistrates court and the number of successful prosecutions is increasing, as are the number of child licenses issued.

	2011-12	2012-13
Prosecutions	45	79
Child licenses issued	150	268
Work permits issued	0	18

The Local Authority's responsibility for Children Missing Education is efficiently and effectively managed by the Attendance and Wellbeing Service. The CME policy and processes are in place to identify, track and monitor this cohort and annual reports are submitted to the Cwm Taf Safeguarding Children's Board (CTSCB).

Interventions are in place to tackle the barriers to attendance faced by particular vulnerable cohorts, such as the joint initiative between the AWS and Community Learning to provide bespoke educational provision for Gypsy Traveller girls of secondary school

<p>age. Adopting an intergenerational approach, this intervention offers literacy and numeracy support for girls who face cultural barriers to school attendance post primary school phase as well as for their mothers who often report development needs in this area.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a result of the Vulnerability Profile developed to identify socio economic factors which may contribute to disengagement from learning, the Authority is now better placed to identify those at risk of disengagement and provide effective support services for young people. • Excellent working relationships have been developed with Careers Wales and schools with a robust information sharing protocol in place to share knowledge and coordinate early intervention. • Through Families First funding transitional support workers post-16 have been effective in securing destinations for young people Tier 2 and Tier 3. • Young people deemed to be Tier 1 are supported by Detached Youth Workers. • The Bridges into Work Project (September 2011-October 2013) engaged with 131 'new' young people aged 16-19 who were not recorded in education, employment or training. 192 individuals attained at least one qualification with 14 entering employment. • The Detached Youth Team effectively support young people to maintain engagement with formal and non-formal education and employment opportunities. 	
<p>The Youth Offending Service has now merged with Merthyr Tydfil.</p>	
<p>67 pupils are currently registered as Elective Home Educated pupils. These pupils are supported by a Key Worker based in Ty Gwyn, who is responsible for engagement, monitoring and support for EHE pupils and parents. All parents are offered support visits within 8 weeks of de-registration from school. Bi-annual visits are subsequently offered to maintain good levels of communication between the families and the service.</p>	
<p>First release exclusion data report highlights that RCT rate of 5 days or fewer within secondary schools has reduced from 89.5 to 82.7 per 1000 pupils. RCT is below the Welsh average in relation to fixed term exclusions 6 days or more per 1000 pupils. RCT is ranked 4th in Wales for the average number of days lost 2.2 compared to 2.5. The downward trend for fixed term exclusions and number of days lost continues to be evidenced with falls of 28% and 19.02% respectively when comparing Autumn Term 2012 with 2013 data. This reflects the impact of the termly support and challenge visits to schools.</p>	
<p>16 pupils were permanently excluded during 2012/13. An additional 3 permanent exclusions were overturned when presented to the school Governing Body. No appeals were subject to an independent appeals panel.</p>	
<p>All young people who enter the criminal justice system complete a learning style questionnaire which ensures that the service can develop bespoke programmes that best suits the young person. In response to recommendations in the Joint Inspection of YOTS a joint YOS/education interface group has been established to develop re-engagement opportunities for young offenders.</p>	
<p>There are good joint working arrangements between services with dedicated EPS time allocated for the YOS to facilitate meaningful re-engagement in education.</p>	
<p>A dedicated trainee programme for Care Leavers continues to support young people at KS5 and beyond providing training and work experience.</p>	

<p>KEY QUESTION 2: HOW GOOD IS PROVISION? Quality Indicator: 2.3. How do we evaluate the promotion of social inclusion and wellbeing? Evaluation</p>	<p>Evidence</p>
<p>2.3.3 How good are our youth support services and personal support?</p>	
<p>A range of services commissioned through Families First provide support for Young People aged 11-25, these projects are evaluated quarterly and the evaluation covers performance, quality of provision and the impact the project has on young people.</p> <p>Services commissioned cover young people who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are known to the Youth Offending Services 	

- need help to enter employment, education or training
- need information, advice and guidance on finances and sexual health
- encourage young people to volunteer
- need help and support to participate in physical activities and sport.

Examples of good outcomes are:

- The Youth Bureau has achieved significant reductions in first time entrants into the youth criminal justice system within Rhondda Cynon Taf. In the period April 2010 – March 2011 this figure was 287; the implementation of the bureau in 11/12 saw this figure reduce to 107 and for April 2012 to March 2013 there were 79 FTE's in RCT.
- Since the introduction of the Youth Bureau and the significant progress made in reducing 1st time entrants the Reparation programme which facilitates work between a victim, communities and those who have committed an offence targets those who have offended or repeat offenders.
- In the first 6 months of 2013/14 52 young people accessed the programme with 38 being young offenders with 100% of young people on a conditional caution and between 70 and 82% of young people on a statutory order completing the intervention.
- STARs project which focus on those young people who are disabled, vulnerable, at risk or have identified health needs and aim to improve the health and well being of young people through delivering programmes that support their access into physical activity and sport.
- For the first half of 2013/14 1324 children and young people accessed the programme with 100% having and improved attitude toward exercise and between 55 – 60% accessing mainstream provision during the intervention.
- Pathways to progression – detached youth service provides a targeted provision engaging with the hardest to reach, most isolated, and disengaged young people in RCT. The deliver a programme of flexible need let interventions to encourage participation, empowerment, healthy and informed decision-making and choices.
- In the first half of 2013/14 179 young people accessed the service, with 100% of young people completing learning and training programmes.
- Sexual Health Outreach services in RCT is a nurse-led service which is provided via a sessional basis for young people aged 11 – 25 years linking closely and supporting frontline professionals and initiatives such as the Team around the Family.
- The aim of this services is to deliver targeted specialist contraception and sexual health support to vulnerable young people who are at high risk of:
 - unintended pregnancy, and
 - poor sexual health and are not effectively accessing mainstream services.
- For the period 1st April 2013 – 31st September 2013 the services provided:
 - 172 sessions in various educational and youth settings.
 - 32 training sessions delivered
 - 52 STI tests
 - 23 pregnancy tests
 - 65 referrals to other agencies.

This service is provided in a range of settings to improve accessibility including education/advice, 1 to 1 advice. In addition to sexual health advice, the service addresses issues such as relationships, smoking and alcohol.

- Canopi Partnerships have sub-groups supporting engagement in education, training and employment. Upper Cynon Canopi developed 'Your Future First' and due to the positive outcomes from the pilot project 'Your Future First' has been included as part of the strategic development of SEETs in RCT.
- SFYP provides a robust package of non formal education opportunities which is needs led support for vulnerable learners and supports schools with a range of interventions designed to improve attendance, attainment and achievement of

<p>young people who may struggle within the formal education environment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Cluster Youth Operational Groups (CYOGs) in each school cluster, plans and delivers a comprehensive range of universal support, each area having an action plan identifying needs and services required. 	
The 14-19 Creative Industries Group together with Designs4Life programme provides innovative events for young people to gain advice and support on entering the creative industry sector.	
RCT has an effective and comprehensive counselling service commissioned through Eye to Eye. During 2012/13, 1653 young people attended counselling. There was a total of 6076 counselling sessions delivered. Overall improvement rates in Emotional health Post Counselling (YP Core) showed that 77.98% of males and 79.90% of females showed an improvement. Furthermore, 72 LAC accessed the Service and 143 SEN.	
<p>In April 2013 the Rapid Intervention Response Team (RIRT) became operational providing an urgent intense family focused service to both children and young people on the cusp of becoming looked after children who are in the looked after system and need to be returned home quickly.</p> <p>RIRT 2013-14 (to date): 37 families, 81 children 9 children returned from LAC to their parents.</p>	
Through Fframwaith RCT successfully secured Pioneer funding working collaboratively with Merthyr to establish the Integrated Family Support Team providing a service that will intervene with families identified as at risk due to parental substance misuse. During 2012-13 84 referrals were received concerning 179 children. 53% of families reported a reduction in their substance misuse after the intervention was completed. 12 EAC children were supported with 4 returning home 26 of the 110 children on Child Protection Register were deregistered following the intervention and a further 23 of the 57 Children In Need ended involvement with Children's Services.	
<p>Viva facilitates and supports young people with or without a disability to access a range of leisure and training opportunities to promote self confidence, challenge aspirations and promote an active and participative life within their own communities.</p> <p>In the first 6 months of financial year 2013-14 147 disabled young people assessed the project of which 32 had higher level needs and 115 with lower level needs.</p>	
The ECPS continues to provide bereavement training and utilise the bereavement resources developed by a multi agency group for use in schools. Crisis intervention support following an unexpected death is provided on a multi-agency basis.	

KEY QUESTION 2: HOW GOOD IS PROVISION?	
Quality Indicator: 2.3. How do we evaluate the promotion of social inclusion and wellbeing?	
Evaluation	Evidence
2.3.4 How good are safeguarding arrangements?	
<p>A comprehensive self evaluation of safeguarding and Child Protection Practices in Education Services for Children and Young People in Rhondda Cynon Taf was carried out by a range of senior officers from across Council Services and Directorates.</p> <p>The Estyn Self Evaluation tool was used to establish the Local Authority's position in relation to safeguarding practices.</p> <p>The findings of the SER were reported to Scrutiny in October 2013 and services have included actions from the areas of improvement identified in operational plans.</p> <p>Progress towards achieving those measures will be monitored by the Strategic group and reported to the Education and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee and the Safeguarding Board on an annual basis.</p>	

KEY QUESTION 2: HOW GOOD IS PROVISION? Quality Indicator: 2.4. How do we evaluate access and school places? Evaluation	Evidence
<p>2.4.1 How well do we provide an appropriate range and number of school places?</p> <p>Rhondda Cynon Taf has a comprehensive range of educational provision across the county providing education for over 39,000 pupils in 138 schools. The Authority has robust forecasting and planning processes for school organisation based on effective working across departments.</p> <p>While there is sufficient provision to meet current demand across the Authority, there remains pockets of over demand and supply together with accommodation that requires improvement. Since January 2012 effective planning and utilisation of available funding options have enabled the successful deployment of resources to deliver;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the closure of 2 nursery schools, 3 infant schools, 2 junior schools and 2 primary schools (9 schools). • Opened 3 new primary schools; • Secured agreement to close a further 3 infant schools and 3 secondary schools from September 2014. • Awaiting WG approval for closure of 1 primary school from September 2014. • Reviewed and remodelled school accommodation, removing surplus accommodation – removing 1,200 surplus places. • Created new primary provision by utilising surplus accommodation at YG Llanhari; • The financial commitment of £50m to build a new secondary school for Aberdare, closing three secondary schools. • The securing of £160M of capital funding to deliver the 21st century schools programme. This is the highest indicative allocation of all Authorities in Wales. Investing in projects removing over 3,300 surplus places. <p>Although improvements have been made and plans in place for future improvements it is acknowledged that this is an ongoing long-term issue with the Authority still having one of the highest percentage of surplus spaces in Wales. The detailed asset management plan, allocation of funding and 21st Century School submission demonstrates the Authority's commitment to continue to improve provision of school places and secure provision that is fit for purpose in the 21st century.</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The authority maintains comprehensive data systems relating to school capacities and admission numbers in line with the MCSW guidance. All are reviewed annually and include school verification and sign off. • Forecasting systems are well developed and utilise the DfES best practice guidance with accuracy continuing to be within the target of 1% of outturn (accuracy of latest forecasts: Secondary -0.46%, Primary 0.72%). • The corporate asset management database (techforge) holds comprehensive school accommodation data including assessments on suitability, condition, sufficiency and statutory compliance. • Overall, both English and Welsh-medium provisions meet current demand although there are localised pockets of over demand and supply. The main reason being the continued demographic movement from the upper valleys with large housing developments around key transportation routes; in particular the M4 corridor. • Any medium to long-term issues are being addressed within the 21st century school proposals. Due to timescales involved with this programme any potential issues in the shorter term are being addressed separately to enable all children who wish to be educated through the medium of Welsh to be accommodated e.g. making a prescribed alteration to provision in YG Llanhari amending the age range from 11-19 to 3-19. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The repairs and maintenance programme is well managed and emergency repairs dealt with promptly- with all except 1 school buying into the SLA, and all school budgets clearly identifying funds for repairs and maintenance. • There are excellent working arrangements in place across directorates to make best use of knowledge and resources to meet needs. The capital programme is developed between Corporate Estates, Finance and Education via the Capital Working Group. There are regular meetings between Corporate Estates and Education Officers to share information on local needs which in turn informs future development and resource allocation. The Head of School Organisation sits on the local development planning group to ensure education links into the wider development and regeneration agenda. • Since March 2012, school inspection reports have provided favourable reports on suitability of school buildings, any issues identified have been reported into the planning meetings. 	

KEY QUESTION 2: HOW GOOD IS PROVISION? Quality Indicator: 2.4. How do we evaluate access and school places? Evaluation	Evidence
2.4.2 How good are our procedures for school admissions?	
<p>The Authority has effective admissions and school places allocation procedures which have undergone major changes in the last 18 months. As a result all admissions to maintained schools are processed in the published timescales in accordance with the Admissions Code of Practice.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School admissions have been centralised. As part of this centralisation, investment has been made into a computerised system that enables across Authority admission with consistent approach and timescales and the option for parents to apply online. Feedback on the first admission round in the school survey had 81.1% of respondents rating the service satisfactory or higher. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The authority has an active local admission forum which undertakes its responsibilities effectively. Admission authorities consult each other regarding admission arrangements and co-ordinate arrangements effectively while still addressing local needs. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A comprehensive range of bilingual information is available to parents on the admission process including Starting School book and guidance leaflets. Information is available in hard copy or online. Information leaflets and posters are displayed in public places e.g. doctors' surgeries, leisure centres. Staff have also undertaken awareness raising sessions e.g. information stall at Early Years Teddy Bears Picnic, notices in press and online. 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is an effective system to ensure that children moving to the area are provided with a school place without delay. All children moving into the area have been offered a suitable place within the WG guideline of 15 days with 91.4% achieving our local target of 5 days. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For pupils living within the county, 98.5% of secondary pupils in Sept 2013 received a place in their first choice school with all applications receiving 2nd preference (relates to 1 school – Y Pant) with 99% of primary pupils receiving their first parental preference choice. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A new online admissions system was trialled in the Autumn Term of 2013, for Secondary school applications in the first instance. A total of 933 parents applied in this way, or 37.6% of the total applications received (2480). As a result of this successful pilot the online service is to be extended to nursery and reception applications from September 2014. 	

KEY QUESTION 2: HOW GOOD IS PROVISION? Quality Indicator: 2.4. How do we evaluate access and school places? Evaluation	Evidence
2.4.3 How good is our co-ordination of early years and play to ensure sufficiency?	
All parents who request nursery education have been provided with an appropriate place either in the maintained or non maintained setting. The vast majority of children are provided with a nursery place within the maintained setting. Nursery education in RCT is currently being reviewed.	
Early Years and Family Support work closely with School Improvement and Access and Inclusion to ensure that appropriate provision is available for all children.	
All Early Years settings are registered education providers and are thus subject to Estyn Inspection. All settings are also registered with CSSIW. Provision is monitored and if not up to the required level then the provider is de-registered. There are currently 21 education providers within RCT.	
The Early Years training unit received excellent reports from external verifiers and moderators concerning quality of the training provided. In 2013 RCT won a national award for the quality and impact of the training provided.	
Early Years education utilise a number of mechanisms to ensure quality of work e.g. quarterly WG reports, Estyn Inspections, Key Commissioners and Fframwaith reviews. To ensure internal quality assurance a number of tools and systems are being utilised/developed; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foundation Phase Strategy Group Flying Start undergoing a baseline assessment visit based on ECERS Language and Play developing pilot to identify appropriate outcomes (ASPECT) Development of parental focus groups to assess satisfaction and inform future development Parenting programme using TOPSE to identify distance travelled. 	
The Family information Service (FIS) provides a good range of information through a range of mechanisms but are aware that delivery mechanisms are evolving and the FIS was re-launched in March 2012 to utilise these advances e.g. video loops, social networking and become more visible to the public via Children's Centres and One 4 All Centres	

KEY QUESTION 2: HOW GOOD IS PROVISION? Quality Indicator: 2.4. How do we evaluate access and school places? Evaluation	Evidence
2.4.4 How well do we co-ordinate youth support services to ensure access to entitlements?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At a strategic level youth support services are co-ordinated through Youth Support Services group which is a multi-agency group from services who provide youth support services across RCT. A Youth Support Strategy is currently being developed which will highlight how 	

<p>RCT will co-ordinate the planning, delivery and co-ordination of youth support services in RCT.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A needs analysis has been developed for young people aged 11-25 by school cluster area has been completed and agreed by the Youth Support Services Group. • An audit of the effectiveness of multi-agency groups who work to support the Extending Entitlement agenda is currently underway with a questionnaire being completed. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SFYP has developed a robust strategy that clearly demonstrates how its vision, objectives and performance measures contribute to the Education Directorate's priorities, the Community Plan, Single Plan, the National Youth Service Strategy and the Youth Work Curriculum Statement for Wales and reflects changing needs and priorities of young people. • SFYP management contribute to the strategic co-ordination of youth support services across RCT by ensuring effective engagement with key strategic partnerships including YOS board, WESP, CSP YASP, 14-19 Board, Drug and Alcohol Delivery Partnerships, LSCB, SHAB and SERAF. SFYP ensures young people's expressed and identified needs, rights and entitlements are championed at a strategic level and direct service delivery. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CYOG multi-agency partnerships have been established in each of the 12 geographical school clusters with action plans developed to show clear linkage to the CYPP and Community Plan. This ensures a consistent framework that allows for locally tailored service development in direct response to expressed and identified need through the extending entitlement survey and stakeholder feedback. • CYOG and Canopi Partnerships co-ordinate and deliver the strategic priorities for young people including improved co-ordination and delivery of local sexual health services and up-skilling practitioners in substance misuse. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SFYP monitors reach and contact levels to ensure provision is targeted where it is most needed. The service has a proven track record of closing provision and restructuring services if demand is not evidenced and actively seeks to address identified gaps and emergent issues. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people with additional learning needs are well provided for within the E3+ formula commitment, with an additional weighting of funds allocated to special schools and special unit pupils. The Council has been awarded Excellence Wales status by the WLG A under the theme 'Our Citizens and Communities: building an inclusive society'. A minimum of 30% of holiday programme places are ring-fenced for young people with ALN. 	

KEY QUESTION 3: HOW GOOD ARE LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT? Quality Indicator: 3.1. How do we evaluate the impact of leadership Evaluation	Evidence
3.1.1 What is the impact of our leadership?	
<p>Senior officers and Elected Members share a joint vision in the belief that the children and young people in RCT deserve to have the opportunity to attend the best schools so that they are given every chance to achieve their potential. Senior Officers and Elected Members across the Authority work together to provide strong strategic leadership improving the outcomes for children and young people at all key stages. This has resulted in key education performance indicators showing improving trends.</p>	
<p>The WAO Annual improvement letter to the Council on October 2013 stated that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council continues to make good progress in addressing the proposals for improvement identified in previous assessments. • The Council is taking action to strengthen its arrangements to monitor, evaluate and report progress against its improvement objectives. • The Council continues to have a robust approach to achieving efficiency and resourcing planned improvements but is facing an unprecedented financial challenge over the medium term. 	
<p>Elected Members and Senior Managers share a good understanding of education issues</p>	

<p>and have a sustained record of making appropriate and often difficult decisions that focus on outcomes for children and young people. One of the Council's priorities is "A Top Quality Education For All" the Council has supported this by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivering 1% protection in their education budgets for all years from 2011-12 to 2013-14 exceeding the WG targets by 0.9%, 0.4% and 0.3% respectively. This high level of protection was recognised by the WG First Minister in November 2013. • Central South Consortium Joint Education Service is established and providing School Improvement functions across five local authorities, hosted by Rhondda Cynon Taf. • Implementing a robust school modernisation programme that tackles issues around surplus places and school re-organisation. • Investing £50m to build a new state-of-the-art secondary school for Aberdare, closing 3 secondary schools. • Committing a further £110m of capital resources, which includes 21st Century Schools Funding from Welsh Government, to deliver 9 major school rationalisation and improvement projects from 2014. This is the largest programme in Wales, and includes 3 new Welsh-medium primary schools. • Investing £3.3m of its own capital funds in extending the Welsh-medium provision at Ysgol Llanhari from 11-19 to 3-19, making best use of surplus secondary places and at the same time, easing pressure on Primary Welsh Medium provision in the south of the county. • Consulting on restructuring the Youth Services, E3+ and 50x60, rationalising youth buildings to create an improved service which will provide better value for money and improved outcomes. <p>Changes to provision or services are accompanied by wide-ranging consultation. This is exemplified by the school modernisation programme where extensive consultation has been undertaken with proposals being amended following consultation to take account of the public's views. The full Business Case for the new Aberdare community School (approved in April 2013) is used by the Welsh Government as an exemplar. The Strategic Outline Case submitted to the Welsh Government for the £24m investment at Y Pant (verbal approval November 2013) is also used by the WG to exemplify good practice.</p>	
<p>Strong cross party leadership continues to prioritise the needs of vulnerable groups of young people across the Council with other Councils including Local Service Board, Cwm Taf Safeguarding Board Cwm Taf YOS and its partnerships.</p>	
<p>The Authority has effective communication with schools and key stakeholders.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior Officers continue to attend Head Teacher representative fora in which National and Local vision, strategies and priorities are discussed and agreed with schools. • The Moodle site for a single point of access to information regarding education services, is now well embedded. • The Director of Education and Lifelong Learning addresses issues of underperformance robustly and directly, he meets with individual Head Teachers to review outcomes and identify school specific areas for improvement. Individual meetings are also held with the Head and Chair of Governors of primary schools identified as underperforming. • 8 warning letters issued with a range of actions of other evidence against underperforming leadership in schools. 	

<p>KEY QUESTION 3: HOW GOOD ARE LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT? Quality Indicator: 3.1 How do we evaluate the impact of leadership? Evaluation</p>	<p>Evidence</p>
<p>3.1.2 How good is our strategic direction and how well do we meet national and local priorities?</p>	
<p>The Council has a clear hierarchy of plans.</p> <p>RCTs Single Integrated Plan (SIP) 'Delivering Change' published in April 2013 sets out how partners will seek to address the key issues faced by the County Borough that ultimately will</p>	

<p>make it a better place to live, work and visit.</p> <p>The SIP replaces a number of different partnership plans including the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Strategy • Children and Young People's Plan • Health Social Care and Wellbeing Strategy • Community Safety Plan • Local Housing Strategy <p>The Plan is led by the Local Service Board representing the partner organisations of the area.</p>	
<p>The Education Directorate Strategic Plan 'A Top Quality Education For All' which is part of the Council's Wales Programme for Improvement Plan (The Council's Corporate Plan) identifies key actions for staff within Education and Lifelong Learning to deliver. Progress against national and local measures is reported to Cabinet on a quarterly basis.</p> <p>Underpinning the above are the Service Operational Plans that are the key delivery mechanisms to improve outcomes and achieve the objectives across all high level strategic planning.</p>	
<p>All documents seek to meet the national and local priorities of literacy and numeracy and continue to work on reducing the impact of deprivation on learner outcomes.</p> <p>The School Effectiveness Framework is at the core of the Cabinet's strategic education priorities of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving attendance, with the strategy, having a significant impact on attendance levels • Improving literacy & numeracy • Improving the use of data to increase accountability at all levels • Modernise the school environments for the 21st Century. <p>Improving leadership and management in schools. Senior officers' involvement and new recruitment processes for all senior leaders in our schools is making a difference in the quality of our senior school leaders. The Council has in place a robust Literacy Strategy and progress against the actions were reported to Scrutiny in March 2013 and October 2013. The improvement in literacy tests between 2012 and 2013 suggests that the Strategy is having a significant impact on improving reading ages.</p> <p>A new approach to raising standards in Numeracy will be commissioned through the Central South Consortium.</p> <p>Work on the transformation agenda continues to develop, with the Council working with Coleg Y Cymoedd, providing a site in the centre of Aberdare, adjacent to the new secondary school, for a new FE College.</p>	
<p>An updated Welsh in Education Strategic Plan will be submitted to the Welsh government for approval in January 2014.</p>	
<p>Strategic Plans continue to be monitored annually or according to the Welsh Government requirements. The Council and Education plans and targets are monitored quarterly and are subject to rigorous scrutiny by Corporate Management Team, Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees. Where there is underperformance or other issues raised, Cabinet has directed Senior Officers to address with robust plans.</p>	
<p>Other Directorates continue to work with education to provide support services for children and young people. Directors from all groups meet on a weekly basis where educational priorities are regularly discussed. The willingness of other directorates to work together to best meet education priorities can be demonstrated by many cross directorate project teams through collaborative working on school building projects, tackling weak leadership, IT management systems etc.</p>	

KEY QUESTION 3: HOW GOOD ARE LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT? Quality Indicator: 3.1 How do we evaluate the impact of leadership? Evaluation	Evidence
3.1.3 How good is the work of our Elected Members and other supervisory boards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has a strong, stable political leadership based around a single party administration and working majority. The Leader and Cabinet Members are actively engaged in all key strategic developments. Service developments are challenged and scrutinised in appropriate detail. • Elected Members have a good track record of bringing about improved learner outcomes. Members scrutinise performance and financial data in detail. • Elected Members demonstrate a clear sense of direction and a collective resolve to progress school improvement priorities through their support, challenge and decision-making in key development areas such as: school modernisation and reorganisation; improving school attendance; improving literacy and maximising resources available to schools, through protecting revenue budgets and seeking other external funding. • Elected members have a clear understanding of the importance of their scrutiny role in delivering improved outcomes for stakeholders. • A comprehensive quarterly performance and financial report is reviewed and challenged by Corporate Management Team, Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committees. • Scrutiny Committees develop their own forward work programme which provides an opportunity to challenge and review any service or provision in more depth. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Local Service Board (LSB) is effective in identifying barriers to improvement and has published a new Single Integrated Plan 'Delivering Change' in April 2013 which replaced previously prepared individual plans, including the Children and Young People's Plan. The Plan is structured around three outcomes – Safety, Health and Prosperity. The plan is focussed around prevention and early intervention and 'Education Attainment' is a key priority sitting underneath 'Prosperity' with multi agency actions including tackling attendance issues, offering diverse pathways to support more people to stay in education, training and employment, and, providing support to improve literacy and numeracy skills. • The Single Integrated Plan has been developed via a Results Based Accountability methodology with details of '<i>what we are going to do</i>' and performance measures to show '<i>how we know we are making a difference</i>'. Some Performance measures in relation to Education will be quantitative for example attainment results, but some will also be more qualitative, for example, results from the Viewpoint survey of young people. The Viewpoint survey has been extremely powerful in measuring the impact of interventions across a range of complex issues. • Quarterly reporting to the LSB of achievement against actions within the Single Integrated Plan has been established and the report on the 'Prosperity' outcome is scheduled for review in February 2014. • The development of the Single Integrated Plan was a catalyst for further changes in the structure of partnership working across Rhondda Cynon Taf. There has been a reduction in Partnership Groups and a greater focus on delivery. • Cwm Taf Regional Collaboration Board is well established and includes Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC, Merthyr Tydfil CBC, Cwm Taf Health Board, South Wales Police and Fire Service, Welsh Government and the Voluntary Sector. The Board is delivering a number of cross boundary priorities including asset management, complex families, empty homes, transport issues and joint Health priorities such as smoking cessation, healthy weight management and mental health and wellbeing interventions. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 3.1.1 sets out examples of how the Elected Members are prepared to make difficult decisions in order to improve educational outcomes. 	

KEY QUESTION 3: HOW GOOD ARE LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT? Quality Indicator: 3.2 How do we improve the quality of what we do? Evaluation	Evidence
3.2.1 How well do we carry out self-evaluation, including listening to learners and others?	
<p>The Council has clear aims and strategic plans and policies that focus on learners' needs.</p>	
<p>There are well-established corporate processes that ensure services undertake regular self-evaluation including annual business planning, quarterly performance management reviews and monthly budget monitoring.</p> <p>While services undertake self-evaluation there is more work required to ensure consistency across services.</p>	
<p>All evaluations both for schools and LA services including monitoring of data with outcome trends are analysed and reviewed on a regular basis. Schools or services that are viewed to be underperforming are required to produce Action Plans to address issues.</p>	
<p>An effective system has been developed to improve the consistency of self-evaluation across services within the Education and Lifelong Learning directorate. All services undertake an annual self-evaluation and attend SMT on a termly basis to discuss outcomes, actions and issues. These evaluations, together with Council-wide priorities help inform the development of the Directorate and Operational Plans.</p>	
<p>Education performance data is regularly shared with Head Teachers in evaluating and agreeing the Council priorities for education resulting in a culture of greater awareness and accountability.</p>	
<p>Staff are involved in the self-evaluations of services through team meetings and 1-to-1s. Action plan progress is included as a regular agenda item on team meetings in order for all staff to have a voice on progress and any barriers identified. The 1-2-1 meetings allow both managers and staff to raise any concerns around individual performance and responsibilities.</p>	
<p>Learners have the opportunity to raise issues and share their views across all areas of the Council's work. The Young People and Families Participation Strategy informs how this will be undertaken. Examples include focus groups of young people regarding council budget allocation, involvement of pupils in school reviews, development of plans and strategies, pupil voice survey.</p>	
<p>Commissioned services are regularly monitored and evaluated. The use of RBA has improved our ability to evaluate services, the outcomes achieved and show the difference they have made. We have a range of effective tools to support evaluation including our commissioning decision-making tool and outcome and cost tool.</p> <p>The Team Around the Family (TAF) approach includes review and measures of distance travelled for individual children, young people and families across a range of domains. It allows us to evaluate the difference we are making for individuals. To ensure TAF does improve outcomes a TAF evaluation framework has been developed and approved.</p> <p>Our innovative outcome framework which looks at outcomes at the population level (whole communities), performance level (for services and systems) and at the individual family level has been developed and approved by Framwaith. The introduction of Team Around the Family completes this framework and will allow us to review outcomes at all three levels.</p> <p>CSSIW in its recent inspection of the ACRF noted the progress made through Families First and Canopi in improving provision of early intervention and prevention services and outcomes for children and young people.</p>	

KEY QUESTION 3: HOW GOOD ARE LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT? Quality Indicator: 3.2 How do we improve the quality of what we do? Evaluation	Evidence
3.2.2 How do we plan and secure improvement?	
<p>Self-evaluation underpins all locally defined priorities and is the focus for delivering national priorities. The data analysis forms the basis for setting the level of differentiated support provided to schools, with targets set and challenged based on contextual data e.g. school attendance rates and trends. As a Council we are self critical and openly recognise the areas for improvement. This is recognised in the annual WAO Improvement Reports.</p>	
<p>All schools are challenged in their target setting using a full range of available data evaluation. Trends and performance by similar schools are also included in the challenge and where appropriate progress is monitored through the year to identify underperformance against these targets e.g. school attendance, levels of progress between key stages.</p>	
<p>Services across the Authority have to report regularly on a suite of indicators and actions. Education SMT oversee progress on service plans with key measures being reported corporately. Performance against target for these measures is monitored using the RAG system with underperformance requiring a written analysis for Scrutiny.</p>	
<p>Information from data analysis, Estyn school inspections, stakeholder feedback, benchmarking and performance trends together with the national agenda are key determinants in developing improvement priorities. Once priorities have been set there has been a strong track record of allocating funding to address priorities.</p>	
<p>The ICT infrastructure is being improved, in particular the education data systems. We have made a large investment in improving the CAPITA SIMS systems and processes. As a result we can directly access all school data and we are now introducing various modules including Youth Work Services and Access & Inclusion Services which have previously been on independent systems. For example, the attendance data for schools is real-time rather than officers having to wait weeks for the information from each individual school as previously. All schools will also have access to the SIMS tracking system and SIMS Discover, the data analysis and reporting tool. Many secondary schools have taken up this new system and this will allow Systems Leaders and other LA staff to monitor pupil progress, e.g. LAC, SEN, FSM or other pupils.</p>	
<p>There are robust mechanisms in place to ensure that planning for improvement involves the experiences and views of stakeholders. e.g. Head Teacher, staff and pupils are always heavily engaged in developing the environment, curriculum and resources for the four new schools within the Cynon valley.</p>	
<p>In addition to the regular auditing of schools compliance with financial procedures the Director makes effective use of Internal Audit to agree an annual plan to sample schools compliance in a range of areas , these have included safeguarding (DBS checks), administration of free school meals, use of attendance codes and after school clubs. Following the receipt of written reports from the auditors the Director takes action as appropriate e.g. written warnings.</p>	
<p>Fframwaith Support Team undertook a rigorous evaluation following the first year of Families First funding of the Programme and individual projects. The Review identified projects which were either not appropriate for Families First funding, not performing sufficiently well and addressed the imbalance of funding across the outcomes. The result of the Review was to develop a new Families First Plan for 2013-14 which increased funding for outcome 1 which has resulted in an improvement in our strategic approach to SEETs and a reduction in our NEET figures – with provisional 2013 data showing further improvement for both year 11 and year 13 pupils. Increased funding was also provided to reduce the gap in attainment and attendance of pupils in receipt of free school meals – analysis of attendance data show that while overall attendance has improved this improvement has been higher for FSM eligible pupils.</p>	
<p>Performance management reports are produced on a quarterly basis that will cover service activity, spend, outcomes achieved and any identified issues that present during the quarter. These reports are presented to the Directions Group and Key Commissioners.</p>	

<p>KEY QUESTION 3: HOW GOOD ARE LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT? Quality Indicator: 3.2 How do we improve the quality of what we do? Evaluation</p>	
<p>3.2.3 How are we involved in professional learning communities?</p>	
<p>The directorate recognises the importance of professional learning communities with staff across all services being actively involved at both local and national levels.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The authority has active representation on all ADEW groups and sub-groups. • All schools are involved in regular cluster meetings which enables a shared approach to problem solving and good practice with a focus on local needs. <p>The Authority and Central South Consortium are committed to using school to school support as an effective practice to promote school improvement. The CSC has contracted with Professor Mel Ainscow who led the Manchester Challenge to initiate a similar programme in the region. The Council and a group of headteachers are working with Professor Ainscow on developing the model.</p>	
<p>The LA is a regular contributor to the national agenda and national developments. e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part of the working group contributing to the All Wales Attendance Framework launched in March 2011. • Education representative on the WG Ministerial Advisory Panel on Substance Misuse. • Attend Basic Skills Consortium Group and National conferences. • Active members of the central south Principal Youth Officers group. • Federation of Detached Youth Work. • International symposium on non-formal education. 	
<p>The Association of Secondary School Head Teachers in RCT continues to work together and with the Council. They meet half termly and share best practice on specific issues, focussing on 2 key issues each meeting. This is followed up by a similar approach with the LA. If a specific issue arises that affects the majority of schools, a task and finish group is set up and the issue is addressed. Recently, this has included managing the in-year transfer of pupils. Already we have seen benefits to this approach with a shared ambition and growing sense of high expectation and accountability.</p> <p>The primary Head Teachers have adopted a similar approach, and a group of 'leading' Head Teachers have a School Improvement Group focussed on developing policy and new approaches ensuring school improvement in partnership with the Council.</p>	
<p>Staff at all levels are encouraged to engage in opportunities to increase their professional knowledge, understanding and skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When new techniques and processes are developed implementation costs include funding to ensure that staff have appropriate training to fully utilise these systems. e.g. admissions MIS, attendance MIS. • HR provide a range of internal run courses from IT skills to ILM certified programmes. These are available to all staff and identified through 1-to-1s or performance reviews. • Middle managers can be nominated by directors for the Aspire programme, in place to provide officers with the skills and experience required to fulfil a senior management role and enable successful succession planning within the Council. • The Transform project for Senior Managers who are identified as likely to play a major role in the Authority in the future has been established to provide participants with skills to improve their personal impact and organisational performance. • The Council runs an Aspiring Head Teacher Programme. The first year was completed in October 2013. 13 of the 17 participants have been promoted to senior leadership posts, including 5 seconded to struggling schools. A new cohort of 22 aspiring headteachers started the Programme in October 2013. 	
<p>Collaboration between services and Authorities is essential in delivering effective services. Staff are involved in both formal and informal collaboration and knowledge sharing with</p>	

<p>neighbouring Authorities. The Authority is actively involved in the Central South Consortium where skills are being shared to benefit all. The Council acts as host authority for the Central South Consortium.</p>	
<p>Through Fframwaith RCT leads the Consortia on Child Poverty. As part of the consortia work a range of learning sets have been undertaken and RCT has had the opportunity to learn and benefit from work within the other authority areas. For example, RCT is now utilising the vulnerable families work undertaken by Merthyr as part of our continuing development of Canopi and Team Around the Family. Fframwaith collaborates with other Local Authorities and partnerships including Bridgend for play, the Over-arching Leadership Group for the South Wales Police Authorities home-school links. We have also undertaken collaborative work with the Welsh Government's innovation and Efficiency Board on costing outcomes. Furthermore Fframwaith led the development of the bid to pioneer the successful Integrated Family Support Team (IFST) which covers RCT and Merthyr Tydfil.</p>	
<p>There has been significant investment in developing the Team Around the Family (TAF) approach with lead professionals identified across all agencies.</p> <p>A comprehensive TAF Workforce and Training Plan has been developed which clearly identifies individual training needs and opportunities to support the skills and knowledge that our workforce needs. Ongoing local and national research has been undertaken to ensure that workforce activity meets needs that have been identified locally, but also reflects current best practice on a national level.</p> <p>It is clear that for the continued implementation of TAF; a culture change is required which will take time and commitment to embed into everyday practice.</p> <p>During phase 1 implementation of TAF, it has also become apparent that some new requirements and changes to working have uncovered some additional practice issues and local learning sets have begun to be facilitated to support the workforce with practice issues and new ways of working to ensure consistency and quality.</p>	

<p>KEY QUESTION 3: HOW GOOD ARE LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT? Quality Indicator: 3.3 How do we evaluate the effectiveness of our partnership working? Evaluation</p>	<p>Evidence</p>
<p>3.3.1 How good are our strategic partnerships?</p> <p>Strategic partnerships are secure, inclusive, well attended and supported by a wide range of partners and contribute to the sustained improvements in outcomes for young people in RCT. A shared agenda and vision to improve outcomes and life chances for the Children and Young People of RCT is evident.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a strong partnership between the Education Service and RCT schools. Schools are clear about the challenge and support categories in which they fit. The vast majority of schools buy into the Council's SLAs. Partnership working is the foundation for the improvements in pupil attainment and wellbeing outlined in 1.1 and 1.2. • The partnership between the Council, Coleg Y Cymoedd, Careers Wales and a range of commissioned voluntary and private sector organisations. The Building the Future Project has reduced the number of young people not in education, employment or training in RCT. In 2012 4.5% of year 11 pupils were identified as NEET compared with 5.7% in 2010. Worth noting is the reduction in the percentage of year 13 & 14 NEET, from 11.6% in 2010 to 9.2% in 2012, in a very difficult economic market. The position in 2013 will probably show an increase due to better data analysis and tracking of school leavers through Careers Wales data being more accurate. The quality of the data is significant improved and steps are being taken to further improve the tracking of post 18 leavers, which has historically been an issue. • The 14-19 Network has worked hard to: ensure the range of options available to students has increased; encourage consortia to challenge quality; and to increase retention rates at Years 12 & 13. This has been achieved. Furthermore, a review of the 14-19 Network has been completed and the recommendations are in the course of 	

<p>being implemented.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multi-agency approaches to early intervention continue to result in a significant reduction in the number of young people in the youth justice system in RCT as evidenced by a 23.4% reduction in the number of first time entrants between 20011/12 and 2012/13. 	
<p>RCT is the host authority for the CSC and has committed commendable resources to ensure it has the right approach and support for it to be a success.</p>	

<p>KEY QUESTION 3: HOW GOOD ARE LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT? Quality Indicator: 3.3 How do we evaluate the effectiveness of our partnership working? Evaluation</p>	<p>Evidence</p>
<p>3.3.2 How do we evaluate the effectiveness of joint planning, resourcing and quality assurance across a range of partnership working?</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic Partnership arrangements are well-established and can evidence tangible benefits for children and young people. The performance management arrangements have improved, however, with increased complex partnership working, many benefits and outcomes from partnership working are difficult to measure especially in the short-term. To improve the planning, resourcing and quality assurance of the 14-19 arrangements, Cabinet made recommendations for consortia to strengthen their governance, management and financial arrangements with consortia coordinators key appointed and focused on improving provision and outcomes. Partnership working across Central South Consortium established across 5 councils due to their relationship through the shared school improvement service. 	

<p>KEY QUESTION 3: HOW GOOD ARE LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT? Quality Indicator: 3.4 How do we evaluate resource management? Evaluation</p>	<p>Evidence</p>
<p>3.4.1 How do we manage our resources?</p>	
<p>There are robust financial and performance management arrangements in place at a corporate and directorate level to ensure that resources are managed effectively.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council operates a comprehensive budget prioritisation process, utilising a corporate medium term financial plan which drives the annual budget cycle. The latest WAO Improvement Assessment: <i>‘The Council continues to have a robust approach to achieving efficiency and resourcing planned improvements in services but is facing an unpredicted financial challenge over the medium term.’</i> Priorities for the Council are established by Cabinet in consultation with Scrutiny and stakeholders with resources invested in these priority services accordingly. A sector leading budget consultation is undertaken each year with public and key stakeholders to identify their priority areas for expenditure. Senior Managers and Elected Members utilise the above to allocate and prioritise spend. <p>The Council’s commitment to education as a priority is demonstrated by the funding of education services at a level above the IBA in each of the last three years. There is also a strong history of allocating funding to match external grants e.g. Services for Young People’s, Building the Future Together and 21st Century School Programme. Furthermore, the capital investment of the Council’s own funds in new schools for Cwmbach, Ynysboeth and Aberdare, Abercynon, YG Llanhari and the rest of the 21st Century School’s programme realise a Council investment of approximately £114m.</p>	

<p>Funding at directorate level is based on priorities and identified need. Budgets are monitored on a monthly basis with the financial position of services and schools a standing item on the senior management team fortnightly meetings. Service Managers are challenged against budget overspend and reported in the quarterly performance exception report to cabinet and scrutiny.</p> <p>This robust monitoring of expenditure and challenging its use enables the Council to fund priorities such as the investment in the Attendance & Wellbeing Service.</p>	
<p>The level of reserves held by schools at the end of 12/13 was £147 per pupil i.e. 3.2 % compared to the Wales average of £154 and 3.3%. Only 9% of our schools have negative balances compared to the Wales average of 11%. We continue to work closely with schools that have deficit balances and assist them to produce and monitor their financial recovery plans. Schools with excessive balances are also required to develop plans to demonstrate how they plan to spend them and are directed to allocate resources in line with the Directors priority</p>	
<p>The percentage delegated to schools has increased to 82.89% in 13/14 from 80.31% 12/13. If transport was excluded this would increase to 87.05%</p>	
<p>Every Headteacher attended financial training sessions between December 2012 and April 2013. All financial related documentation and policies are now on the LA Moodle site and this is the communication method used to share all financial information, including their formula allocations.</p> <p>A further training session was held with all the Secondary Bursars in Nov 2103, which provided updates and shared best practice, including use of the deficit protocol and financial planning.</p>	
<p>All financial expenditure is monitored closely, including grants and carefully related planning priorities. Education and Finance Teams have robust monitoring methods to ensure resources are used effectively and identify any potential service changes e.g. when Glanffrwd Infants closes 31/08/14 the premises will be re-designated as a post 16 Autistic provision for a maximum of 15 places. This provision will meet the increasing demand for out of county placements at an annual cost of £492k i.e. £33k per place which compares favourably to the £51k which is the current average cost of an out of county placement i.e. an annual saving of £277k.</p> <p>Monthly S151 reports, which identify key business and financial risks are discussed by Education Senior Management Team and the Corporate Management Team.</p>	
<p>Senior Finance and 14-19 officers have met with all secondary Head Teacher individually to inform the allocation of 14-19 funding and identify the most effective allocation of funding to meet students and providers requirements.</p> <p>Meetings are also planned with each school bursar to discuss issues including finance, HR and to identify option for securing budget efficiencies.</p>	
<p>Corporate Estates has completed an in-depth analysis of all the Council's school estate, this analysis formed the basis for our School Modernisation Programme</p>	
<p>The Council's sector leading and innovative School Modernisation Programme and 21st Century School Programmes for 2014-2020 rely on the effective use of Council resources to fund new schools for Aberdare, Ynysboeth, Abercynon and Cwmbach. Over the next four years the WG support with 50% for the £100m 21st Century School Programme. This is the largest school modernisation programme in Wales.</p>	
<p>In the latest local school survey 80% of schools rated the financial information (including comparative data) they receive as good or very good.</p>	
<p>Resources are well managed through our commissioning processes. The model and the role of the Directions Group and Key Commissioners in resourcing priorities are viewed as effective and transparent by partners. Commissioning priorities are detailed in the Children and Young People Plan and all existing contracts have been mapped against the priorities of the plan to ensure strategic relevance.</p>	

KEY QUESTION 3: HOW GOOD ARE LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT? Quality Indicator: 3.4 How do we evaluate resource management? Evaluation	Evidence
3.4.2 How do we provide value for money?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure that our schools get value for money from Service Level Agreements we have established a Primary Traded Services Board with our Primary Head teachers. This Board meets at least every half term and its terms of reference are to review, challenge and amend all SLAs. • As a direct result of this board from Sept 2013 a new SLA for Pest Control was established and from April 2014 every school will buy into the Special Insurance Perils SLA. Both SLA's will ensure that every school is adequately covered and will benefit from economies of scale from one contract. • The ICT SLA is under review and two new SLAs will be available for schools from April 2014. One will cover the core elements, which several schools purchase independently now e.g. licence costs, hence will save money as a result. This is a mandatory SLA. • The second is optional and will offer curriculum support on a cluster basis. 	
<p>Good use of data ensures that we are targeting resources effectively efficiently economically. To achieve this, the Council has jointly collaborated with a neighbouring Council to purchase an integrated information management system i.e. Capita One. A planned implementation process will allow three services to be fully operational from April 2014 i.e. Exclusions, Youth and Governors and the remaining services will come online during the financial year 14/15.</p>	
<p>Value for money underpins the provision of all services across the Council. The importance of financial and budgetary issues and their relationship with strategy is reflected in business plans and the arrangements for reviewing performance. The WAO Improvement Assessment reports that</p> <p><i>'the Council continues to focus on stability and sustainability in terms of its finances through an effective financial management framework.'</i></p>	
<p>Over the past few years a number of services within the Education Directorate have been restructured to realise efficiency savings, such as Service to Young People, School Organisation and Admissions Team, Governors Support Team and Senior Management arrangements. As a result, teams are working more efficiently, undertaking the majority of the same tasks, but more effectively.</p>	
<p>Senior Officers within finance work closely with schools to improve their resource and financial management, since the last inspection they have introduced a number of new systems and practices including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • innovative invest to save program to increase sustainable energy efficiency. • introduction of online dinner money payments. <p>This partnership approach is valued by schools with 68% rating the support they receive to improve resource and financial management as good or very good.</p>	
<p>The following collaborative arrangements with partner Local Authorities have generated substantial efficiency savings and other benefits for the local authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CSC – the shared School Improvement Service with Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil and the Vale of Glamorgan. • Education and Child Psychology Services – managed and delivered by RCT for Merthyr Tydfil. The cost of the service has fallen in recent years due to the economies of scale and efficient management and work practices. • Music Service – for the past 2 years RCT has led and managed Caerphilly's Music Service. This collaboration has been a success. • The Council is leading on the Cwm Taf regional collaboration fund project to improve the Schools ICT Management Information System and Infrastructure, which will include Merthyr Tydfil CBC. • The Council is an active member of the Welsh Purchasing Consortium project team 	

for procurement of Agency staff. This being the biggest collaborative services contract for the Welsh Public Sector and enables economies of scale to be achieved by centralised services and schools.

Assessment of :

Overall Performance

- Children and young people have made good progress at Key Stages 1, 2 & 3 in the past 3 years reducing the gap between our performance and the Wales average. The number of schools in the lower two quartiles when compared with schools with similar levels of Free School Meals across Wales has reduced and for the majority of indicators greater than 50% are in the first two quartiles. This performance needs to be further improved and sustained. The national literacy and numeracy tests indicate that improvement has been made when compared to the non-statutory tests carried out in the prior year, in particular in the primary sector. However, we have too many children with reading ages significantly below their chronological age and this needs to be addressed as an urgent priority.
- Performance measures for Key Stage 4 indicate strong progress is being made with the Council's progress in 2013 faster than the Welsh average for the majority of the key performance measures, which is evident by the improvement in the WG secondary school banding. However, too few children achieve A*-A in their GCSEs.
- We want all our schools to be good schools, however, too many of our schools (47% since the introduction of the common inspection framework) are considered by Estyn to be adequate for current performance. Often the reason for the poor performance is weak leadership and management that has not tackled historical underperformance. To address this, we have strengthened the level of challenge and support we provide to such schools and significantly raised our expectations as to the outcomes the schools should achieve. This change is evidenced by the fact that 79% (42 out of 53) of schools inspected by Estyn are considered to have at least good prospects for improvement. There is good support provided to schools for pupils with Additional Learning Needs, inclusion, wellbeing and access to education and youth support services.
- The Council and its partners strongly supports the wellbeing of children and young people and actively engages them in participation and decision-making. Since the last inspection primary and secondary school attendance has improved, with the majority of primary schools now in the first two quartiles when compared to similar schools in Wales. Secondary school attendance improved at the fastest rate in 2012/13, however, too many schools are in the lower two quartiles when compared to similar schools across Wales. The rates of improvement in the primary and secondary schools have been sustained in 2013/14.
- The Council's partnerships are good and educational standards and outcomes achieved have improved as a result. This is evident from the good progress made by partners in reducing the number of young people not in education, employment and training which has fallen in 2012/13 (provisional figures) despite the very difficult economic climate.
- Good progress has been made in planning and delivering a very ambitious school modernisation programme, closing 9 schools, securing agreement from WG to close a further 6 schools from September 2014, and reviewing and remodelling school accommodation, removing surplus accommodation. In total, the Council before any changes in demographics has removed or received approval from Welsh Government to remove 3,132 surplus places. This represents 28% of the surplus places used by Estyn in the inspection of the Council in 2012.
- Furthermore, the Council has secured the capital funding to continue to close schools and to build new or remodelled schools to further reduce surplus places, this includes the £160m 21st Century Schools Programme. The 21st Century Schools Programme will remove over 2,400 surplus places, 930 of which have had approval (Aberdare secondary school closures), and a further 1,500 is planned over the next few years.
- The Council and its partners have strengthened Safeguarding policies and procedures and will continue to be vigilant in ensuring they are rigorously complied with.
- Good progress has been made in improving the use of data to inform service provision specifically in

Capacity to Improve

- The Council's vision for learners is underpinned by national and local priorities. Strong strategic leadership by Elected Members, Officers and Partners has led to continuous improvement in learner outcomes in recent years. A considerably greater focus on improving education standards and outcomes is evident across school Governing Bodies and Head Teachers.
- Elected Members have made and are prepared to make further difficult decisions to improve the quality of learning and learners outcomes. The capital investment of nearly £200m in the school modernisation programme is evident of this commitment to children and young people in Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- The WAO's Annual Improvement Report and the Council's commitment to addressing the recommendations of the 2012 Estyn Inspection highlight a strong track record of delivery.
- The 2013 academic and attendance outcomes show a "step change" in performance of the Council's schools, and the early indications are that this will be sustained in 2013/14. For example, the first half term's attendance figures are showing further improvement than the prior period in 2012/13.
- The focus for the next three years is to continue to improve standards of literacy and numeracy at all key stages; improving educational results at key stages 4 & 5 for all young people whatever their need; improving attendance across all school sectors; and raising accountability at all levels in the educational system in Rhondda Cynon Taf for educational performance.
- There is strong performance and financial management across the Council and its partners which ensures the allocation and use of resources is focussed on key priorities, of literacy, numeracy, attendance and increased accountability.
- The Council has an effective relationship with the Central South Consortium and the other four local authorities and has recently restructured the joint school improvement service to meet the requirements of the WG's National Model for Regional School Improvement, and developed a School to School Support Model based on best practice from the London and Manchester Challenges. This new way of working is supported by WG and has been embraced by the region's headteachers. This bodes well for the future.
- The Local Service Board is committed to implementing the recommendations of its strategic partnership review, which will further enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of statutory partnerships including Fframwaith (CYPP). This will ensure that resources are focussed on a limited set of priorities and there are sufficiently robust performance management arrangements in place to measure the benefits to learners and others.
- The Families First project will further develop preventative services for learners and their families. The project will support learners' wellbeing and this have a positive impact on raising standards of attainment for some of our most disadvantaged.
- The Council is committed to further developing the use of data to focus initiatives on areas of need and to challenge underperformance within and between schools .