

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
MUNICIPAL YEAR 2016-2017

**EDUCATION & LIFELONG
LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Date: 1st February 2017

**REPORT OF:
Hannah Woodhouse Managing
Director
Central South Consortium (CSC)**

Agenda Item No. 3

**Central South Consortium Contribution
to Raising Standards in RCT Schools**

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with a summary of school improvement activities that are undertaken in partnership between Central South Consortium (CSC) and RCT School Improvement services

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

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

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Since 2012, Central South Consortium (CSC) has delivered aspects of school improvement services on behalf of five authorities: Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf and the Vale of Glamorgan. This covers 400 schools, 30% of Wales' children. It is a growing region with a rapidly changing demographic encompassing increasingly diverse communities across the economic sub region. It remains the region with the highest number of children living in poverty – just over 1 in 4 children received free school meals in 2016.
- 3.2 The CSC delivers challenge and support on behalf of the five local authorities, governed through a Joint Committee of Cabinet Members from each authority. The Joint Committee meets four times a year and formally approves the annual business plan and budget for the service, holding the service to account in terms of performance and budgetary control.

- 3.3 Scrutiny Committees in each of the five authorities request that the Lead Officer reports on the performance of the schools in their authority, and an annual report from the consortium relating to progress in the previous academic year and priorities for the year ahead is also provided.

4. CSC BUSINESS PLAN 2016/17

- 4.1 The consortium business plan for 2016/17 can be found here www.cscjes.org.uk/About-Us . It has three priorities:

- Raising standards particularly in literacy both in Welsh 1st language and English, numeracy/mathematics and improving the outcomes of learners from vulnerable groups;
- Increasing capacity within the school system to be self improving, particularly improving leadership and governance, teaching and learning and effective challenge and support;
- Develop the consortium to be a high performing organisation focusing on performance management, governance and effective use of resources.

- 4.2 The business plan includes ambitious targets based on those set by each local authority whilst also reflecting target set by the schools. Each local authority, also agrees its priorities within an Annex attached to the business plan with activities and targets linked to the corporate plans.

- 4.3 The business plan sets out how these priorities will be delivered through effective school self-evaluation and improvement planning, underpinned by building capacity in schools to support other schools through the development of the 'Central South Wales Challenge'. This is led by schools and has involved the continued development of evidence based strategies through school improvement groups (SIGs), pathfinder pairings, school improvement hubs and peer enquiry models in which schools can be resourced to work together to share practice at every level across the region. Further information about these programmes can be seen here <http://www.cscjes.org.uk/Central-South-Wales-Challenge/What-is-the-Strategy>

- 4.4 The consortium's self evaluation process reviews regularly the impact of challenge and support and provides regular update reports to the Advisory Board and Joint Committee. Part of the Central South Consortium's self-evaluation is drawn from a specific evaluation programme commissioned from Cardiff University focused on the Central South Wales Challenge programme to evidence impact over time on capacity in the system beyond the immediate school performance information.

5. PERFORMANCE ACROSS CSC in 2016

- 5.1 Since 2012 standards have improved rapidly, compared to the national average, across the region at every key stage. In 2016 the region continued to

show strong improvement and was above the national average at every key stage for the first time and remained above it for the second year in foundation phase and key stages, 2 to 4. Standards for the most vulnerable children continued to rise fastest in the region, compared to Wales at all key stages, and in particular children living in poverty perform better in the Central South region than across the rest of Wales at key stage four.

- 5.2 In 2015/16 the proportion of schools in reported inspection categories (requiring significant improvement and in need of Special Measures) is lower than the national proportion in 2015/16 (5.5% regionally compared to 6.0% nationally). This proportion is lower than the cumulative proportion seen since 2010 regionally and nationally (7.6% for both). However, based on 2015/16 inspections, more secondary schools went into a category or follow up compared to the national position whilst primary schools' inspection profile is significantly better than the national picture.
- 5.3 Categorisation outcomes for the 2016/17 academic year demonstrate that schools in need of the more intense levels of support have reduced in each authority across the region, although less so at secondary level. Categorisation headlines for the region will be presented to the Scrutiny Committee following the national publication on the 31st January. Draft information was presented to cabinet in January and the report can be found here [Cabinet 18-Jan-2017](#)
- 5.4 During the 2015/16 year three local authorities in the region were removed from an Estyn follow up category; Special Measures (Merthyr Tydfil), Significant Improvement (Cardiff) and the Vale of Glamorgan was removed from Estyn monitoring. All three inspection reports cited the contribution of the consortium in working effectively with the local authority to improve outcomes for learners and contributed towards the progress made in the authorities' schools.
- 5.5 In February/March 2016, the consortium itself was inspected by Estyn. The inspection report recognised progress in establishing clear strategy, vision, delivery of consistent challenge and support and partnership working. It had three 'good' judgements for leadership, improving quality and strategic partnerships and two 'adequate judgements' relating to school improvement and use of resources. The four recommendations focus on:
 - reducing variation in standards at KS4
 - improving specificity of judgements of teaching and leadership by challenge advisers,
 - evaluating impact of support strategies and
 - evidencing value for money.

6. CONSORTIUM SELF EVALUATION & BUSINESS PLANNING 2017/18

- 6.1 The Consortium business planning process for 2017/18 is well underway and will be presented to the Joint Committee in March 2017.
- 6.2 The 2017/18 business plan will be developed in the context of a number of specific strategic challenges as well as areas where self-evaluation indicates area for improvement. Strategic challenges for the Consortium include the need to work with others across Wales and with Welsh government to support the implementation of the new curriculum, 'Successful Futures'. A number of schools are working as 'pioneers' developing elements of the curriculum or teaching and learning models, but there remains at present a need for further clarity about how implementation of curriculum reform for all schools will work. In addition, there remain significant challenges about workforce reform, including measures needed to meet the aspirations for spoken Welsh and digital skills as well as new proposals for reform of initial teacher training. A further question concerns the emerging proposals for local government reform due in the Spring of 2017, which emphasises a need for services to be delivered collaboratively across authorities and regions.
- 6.3 The self-evaluation report is updated regularly and identifies a number of areas for improvement for the **region as a whole**. These include:
- Despite a narrowing of the gap, gaps for vulnerable learners, particularly e-FSM learners, are still too wide;
 - There is significant underachievement by boys in languages both English and Welsh;
 - There remains wide variation in secondary outcomes with a small number of very vulnerable secondary schools making progress too slowly ;
 - More able learners' outcomes are getting better but can further improve particularly at Key Stage five (post 16);
 - Leadership capacity in the system and recruitment to core subject teaching posts remains a challenge;
 - Challenge advisers' reporting is improving but judgements regarding teaching and leadership need to be made more robustly;
 - There is evidence to link most school to school working to impact but more needs to be done to evidence sustainable impact through evaluation and deepen the impact of enquiry led practice at classroom level;
 - There is more to do to build system leadership characteristics in some schools
 - Implementation of performance management needs to be tighter for staff and there is more to do to embed a culture of self evaluation and business planning in order to evidence value for money;
 - There is further work to do with elected members and governors to raise awareness and improve coordinated scrutiny of the consortium.
- 6.4 The business plan for 2017/18 will set out how the organisation will, as far as possible, respond to strategic challenges and address areas for improvement along with addressing the Estyn recommendations through a detailed

resourced plan developed with input from schools, and officers from the CSC and Local Authorities.

- 6.5 In the financial year 2017/18, local authorities have reduced core funding to the consortium by 5% compared to that of the previous year. The business plan will include how the Education Improvement Grant (EIG) is to be allocated, which will aim to further increase delegation rates (currently 92% of EIG is delegated to schools) and reduce further the portion retained which is increasingly used to fund schools to provide support. In addition Welsh Government provides other grants to the Consortium to deliver specific national priorities, normally through school led projects.
- 6.6 The final business plan for the financial year 2017/18 will be presented to the Joint Committee for approval in March 2017. The plan will have five areas of focus:
- Improving outcomes for vulnerable learners through effective partnership work with inclusion services;
 - Delivering curriculum reform through school to school working;
 - Improving leadership, governance and workforce reform;
 - Providing rapid and sustainable intervention;
 - Delivering value for money.

7. PERFORMANCE IN RCT SCHOOLS

- 7.1 Members have already had the opportunity to scrutinise outcomes for Foundation Phase to Key Stage 3 in the scrutiny meeting of 29th September 2016 ([Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee 29-Sep-2016](#))
- 7.2 Verified outcomes for Key Stage 4 & 5 will be scrutinised on February 1st in the same meeting as this report is presented. Consortium outcomes are included in annex attached to this report.
- 7.3 Members also had the opportunity to scrutinise inspection outcomes for the academic year 2015/16 in the scrutiny meeting of 28th November 2016 ([Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee 28-Nov-2016](#))

8. CHALLENGE AND SUPPORT PROVIDED BY CSC ON BEHALF OF RCT

- 8.1 In 2016/17 RCT Local Authority spent £1,215,716 on core funding for the consortium function. In addition to the core costs of the consortium this has provided funding for the twenty-one challenge advisers plus support for Schools Challenge Cymru Advisers, and two part-time senior Challenge Advisers.
- 8.2 Challenge advisers have the relevant educational background, level of experience and are providing good quality support and challenge to schools. They have continued to work well and in partnership with the local authority to

provide effective monitoring, challenge, support and intervention where needed. Challenge advisers have commissioned bespoke support and intervention from the wider support teams within the Central South Consortium.

- 8.3 More broadly, support provided by the consortium to schools in RCT has included literacy and numeracy support in 7 secondary schools, 14 primary schools and 1 special school. For these activities direct funding has been provided in some cases. The impact of this support has been reported during the progress monitoring of schools receiving red and amber levels of support. Schools from across the sectors within RCT have also accessed professional development programmes provided by Hub schools across the region.
- 8.4 RCT schools involved in *providing* support as part of the Hub programme can be seen in table1.
- 8.5 Three schools have been supported as part of pathfinder pairings. Again, where these are red and amber support schools their impact is monitored and evaluated in the red and amber schools progress reporting. Four schools within RCT have provided support to other schools as part of the pathfinder programme.
- 8.6 The majority of RCT schools have been involved in School Improvement Group (SIG) working, and during 2015/16 SIGs including RCT schools have focused on: literacy, numeracy, teaching and pedagogy, pupil voice, ICT and digital curriculum framework and assessment. SIGs are reviewed annually and have to provide a report on their priorities and impact against their priorities twice a year in order to be funded. 10 RCT headteachers act as convenors for SIG groups.
- 8.7 Six RCT schools have engaged in the peer enquiry programme, which supports Headteachers working in triads to review and evaluate focus areas in each school and then providing a detailed report on the strengths and areas for improvement;
- 8.8 The consortium has invested heavily in leadership provision in the 2015/16 year. This has included opportunities to support another school with leadership capacity or coaching, leadership of school to school provision and direct leadership programmes. Of these, 15 Headteachers have undertaken the New to Headship programme; two Headteachers have undertaken the Strategic Headship programme; 11 Headteachers have completed the Consultant Headship programme and there have been 14 successful NPQH applicants and a number of Heads are being funded to mentor other future leaders as part of building leadership capacity;

- 8.9 There have been three Schools Challenge Cymru Advisers supporting five schools in RCT and in addition the Foundation Phase, Welsh in Education, Hwb+ and Qualified for Life teams based in school improvement hubs have also supported RCT schools as part of their grant funded operation.
- 8.10 RCT has also requested and received additional specific support in the following areas:
- Continuity of progression from KS2 to KS3 – effective transition – with a key focus on vulnerable learners including those eFSM and also More Able and Talented
 - Narrow the gap in outcomes for children facing the effects of deprivation – in particular in our primary schools - Data for eFSM pupils demonstrates a narrowing of the gap between eFSM pupils and non-eFSM pupils at both Foundation Phase and KS2. Members may wish to receive more information on this work in a future meeting

9. **ESTYN INSPECTION OF CENTRAL SOUTH CONSORTIUM
FEBRUARY/MARCH 2016**

- 9.1 Estyn inspected Central South Consortium in February/March 2016 and evaluated the impact of the consortium on school improvement across the region. In the report is stated:-
- 9.2 'The consortium has a clear vision and strategy to improve schools that is understood by most stakeholders and underpins the support for school improvement well. Almost all schools across the region are engaging purposefully with school-to-school working.'
- 9.3 'The consortium works effectively with its local authority partners to share information about the performance of schools across the region, and to identify schools causing concern. Meetings to review the progress of schools in the highest categories of support are regular and place an appropriate emphasis on the role of the headteachers and governors to provide evidence of progress. Where there are concerns about a school's progress, the consortium acts swiftly to alert the local authority and provides timely advice to support the local authority's use of statutory powers to intervene in the school.'
- 9.4 'All schools in the region belong to a SIG and most schools have engaged very positively with this activity. The SIGs provide well-structured opportunities for schools to work together on improvement priorities that are specific to their context, and to share best practice. Engagement in this work has promoted productive school-to-school working across the region.'

10. CONCLUSION

- 10.1 There are a number of issues which the Central South Consortium need to make faster progress on:
- 10.2 Continued focus on the achievement of pupils eligible for free school meals across the region;
- 10.3 Ensure that the support provided to these schools who received funding from the Welsh Government from Schools Challenge Cymru is aligned to the support and challenge process of the Central South Consortium.
- 10.4 Analysis of key stage 2 and 3 tests has indicated variation of teacher assessment and moderation. The national approach to verification of teacher assessment has been shown to be rigorous and impactful, this will continue to be an area of focus for 2016-2017;
- 10.5 Continue to work with all Human Resource departments and governor support teams to embed consistency and provide quality advice for schools regardless of where they are in the region;
- 10.6 Improved use of information systems across the region through the development of Cronfa as a single point of information for schools, Local Authorities and consortium colleagues across the region.

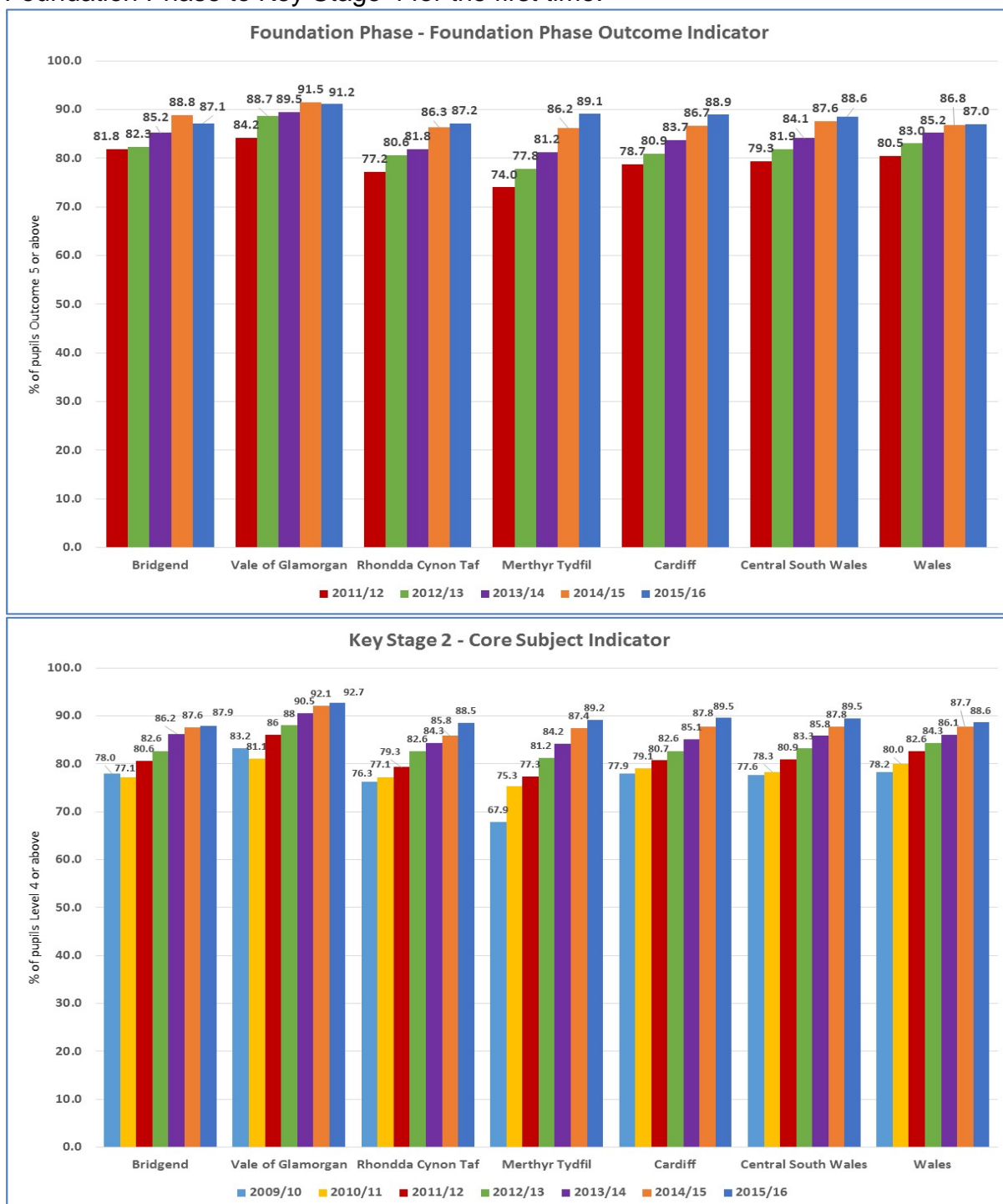
11. Table 1

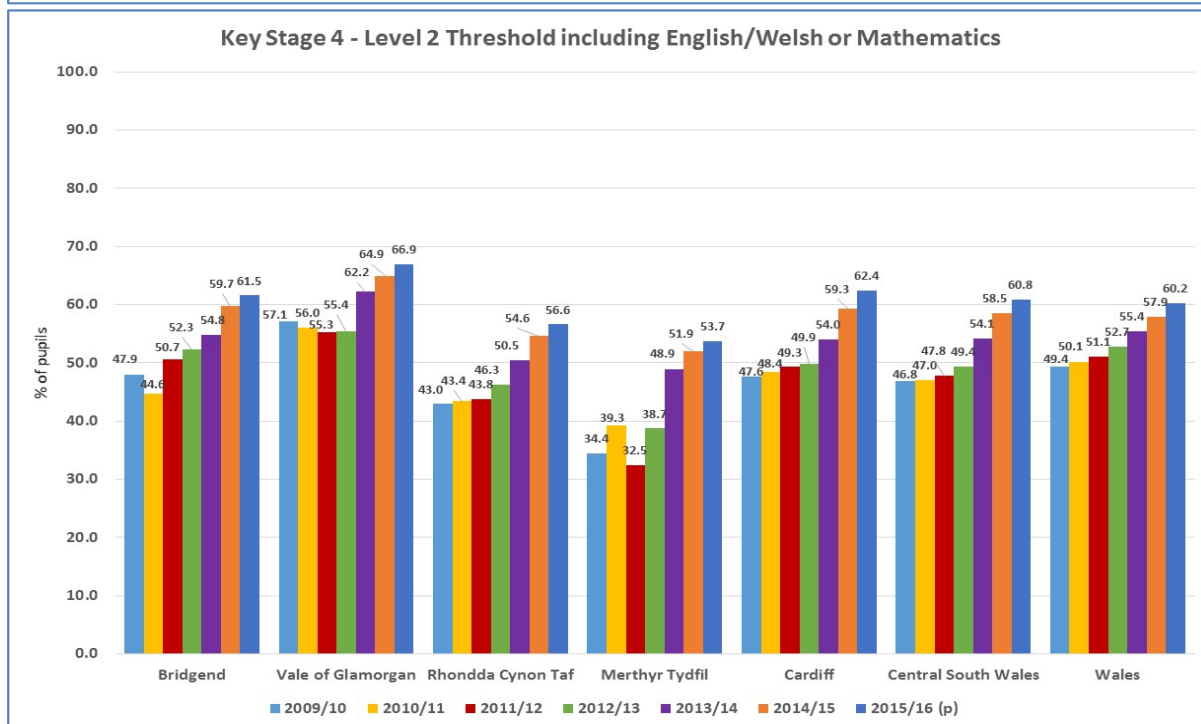
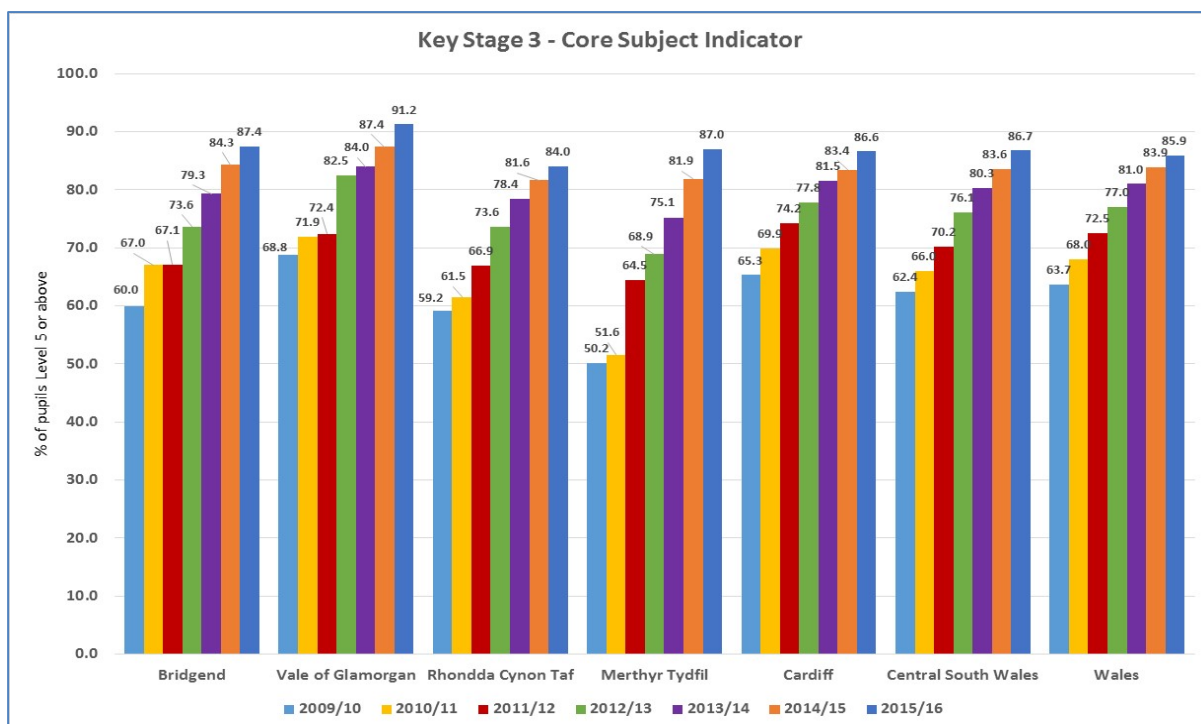
Hub Type	Name of Hub	Programmes
Curriculum	Bryn Celynnog	Effective numeracy transition that engages learners and parents, A Contextualised Skills Curriculum to Support the New GCSEs & Effective numeracy transition that engages learners and parents
Curriculum	Brynnau Primary	Write from the start: Mark making to extended writing
Curriculum	Darran Park Primary	DCF: Interacting and collaborating & DCF: Producing digital content
Curriculum	Dolau	Effective use of teaching assistants in the Foundation Phase
Curriculum	Fern Federation	Developing numerical reasoning through questioning & Making sense of a task driven curriculum, Developing Numerical Reasoning Through Questioning - Cohort 2 & Making Sense of a Task Driven Curriculum - Cohort 2
Curriculum	Pontypridd High	Science for NQTs and Teach First, Improving the performance for all pupils in science & Science for NQTs and Teach First
Curriculum	Treorchy Comprehensive	Improving Writing Skills within the Welsh Second Language classroom & Sector leading practice – Welsh 2nd Language and Bilingualism & GCSE Workshop - French and Spanish
Curriculum	Y Pant	AS and A Level Workshop - French and Spanish, Developing approaches to teaching MFL in KS2 & AS and A Level Workshop - Spanish
Curriculum	Ysgol Llanhari	Effective use of teaching assistants in the Foundation Phase
Professional Learning	Cardinal Newman RC	Future Middle Leaders
Professional Learning	Cwmclydach Primary School	Strategic use of digital technology for whole-school & improvement of learning and teaching

Hub Type	Name of Hub	Programmes
Professional Learning	Fern Federation	Future Leaders - Primary, Developing the co-operative learner & Developing the Reflective Practitioner
Professional Learning	Ferndale Community School	Existing Middle Leaders
Professional Learning	Ferndale Community School	Existing Middle Leaders
Professional Learning	Penygawsi Cluster	Designing Great Learning & Existing Middle Leaders
Professional Learning	Tai Federation	Team Teach Development Hub
Professional Learning	Treorchy Comprehensive	OTP, ITP, 'Challenging Pupils' – MAT and NACE Accreditation, Effective KS2/3 Transition - improving Standards and Wellbeing Effective School Self Evaluation (including IRIS), Effective use of data for School Improvement & Effective SEN/Pastoral Provision – Impact on Standards and Wellbeing
Professional Learning	Y Pant	Future Middle Leaders - cohort 1, Questioning and Higher Order Thinking: Challenge for All (including MAT learners) & Future Middle Leaders

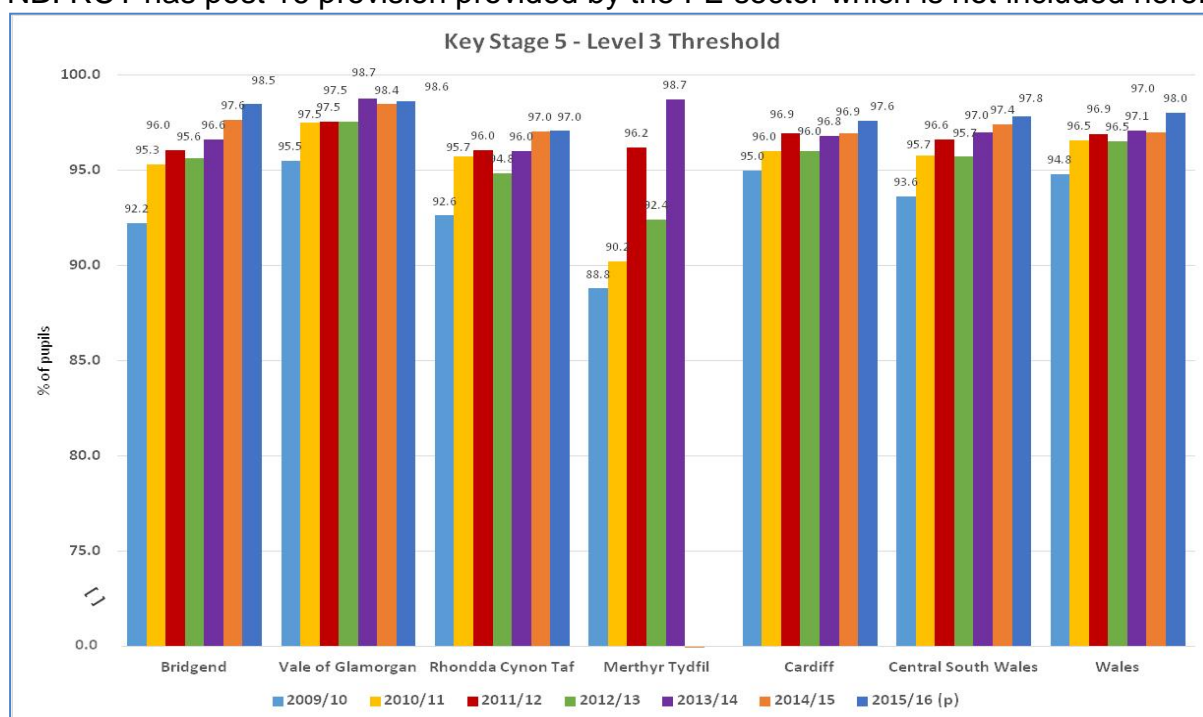
Annex: Headline results across the Central South region 2015/16

Outcomes in the first four key stages have risen across the region, although not in every local authority in the Foundation Phase, and sit above the national average at Foundation Phase to Key Stage 4 for the first time.

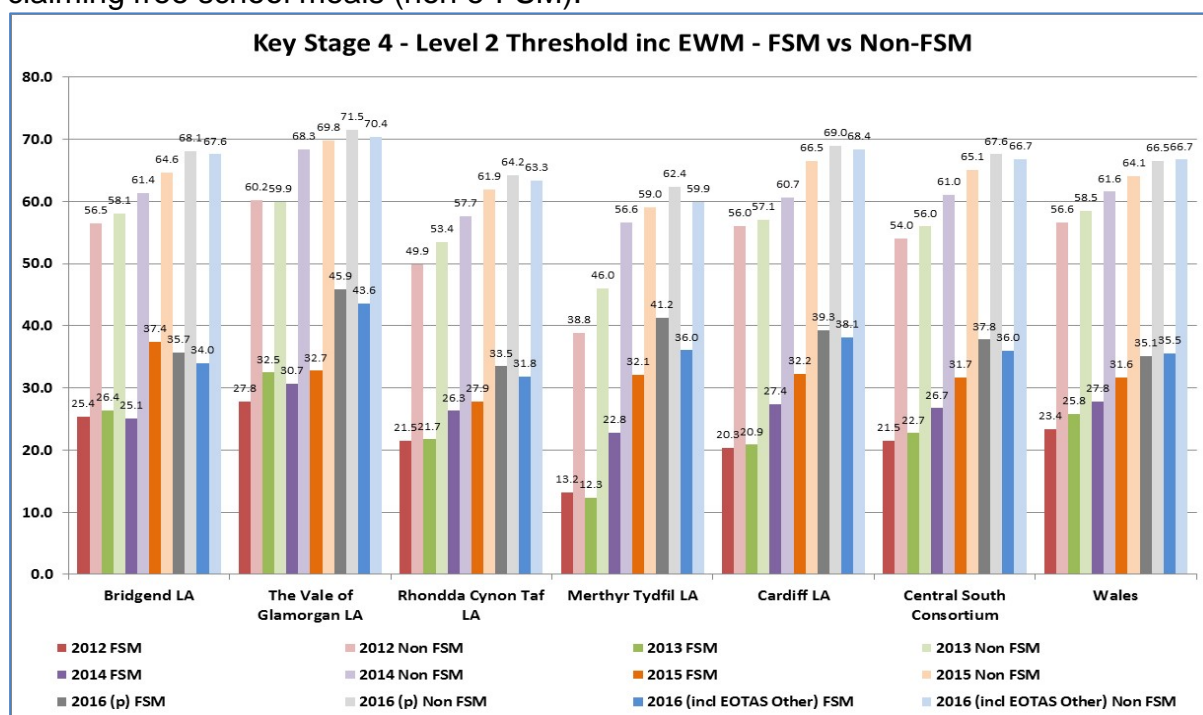




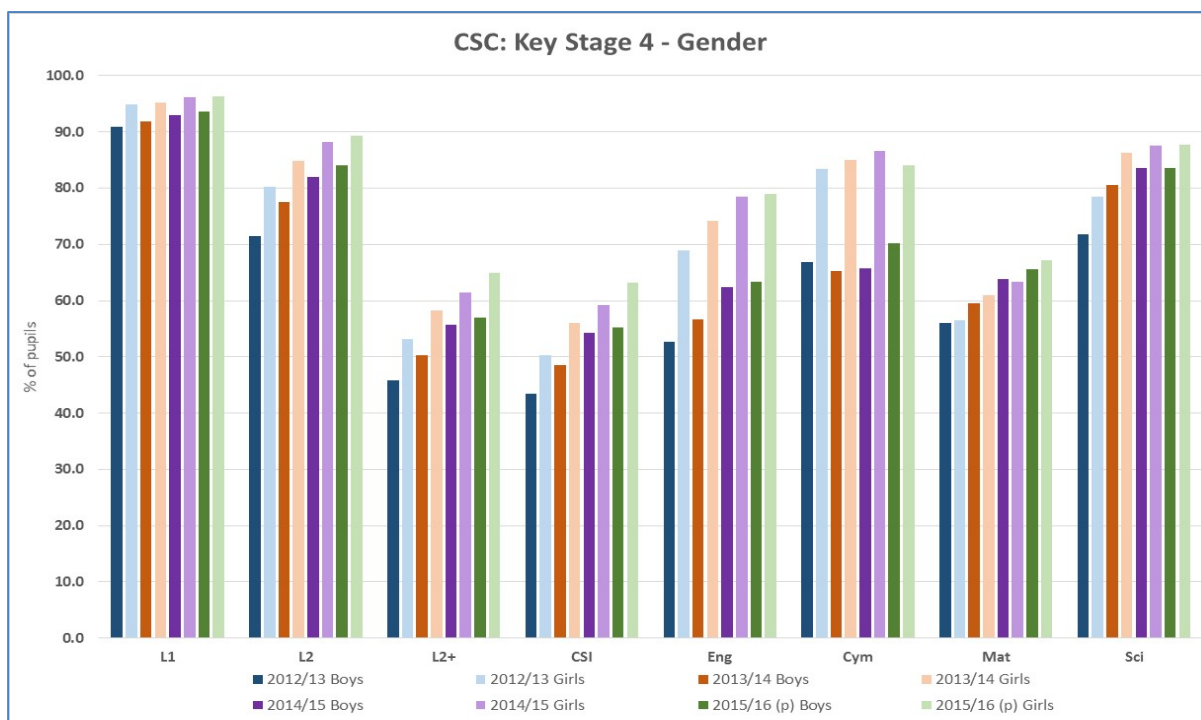
There is further work to do at Key Stage 5 (in school sixth forms) across the region.
NB: RCT has post 16 provision provided by the FE sector which is not included here.



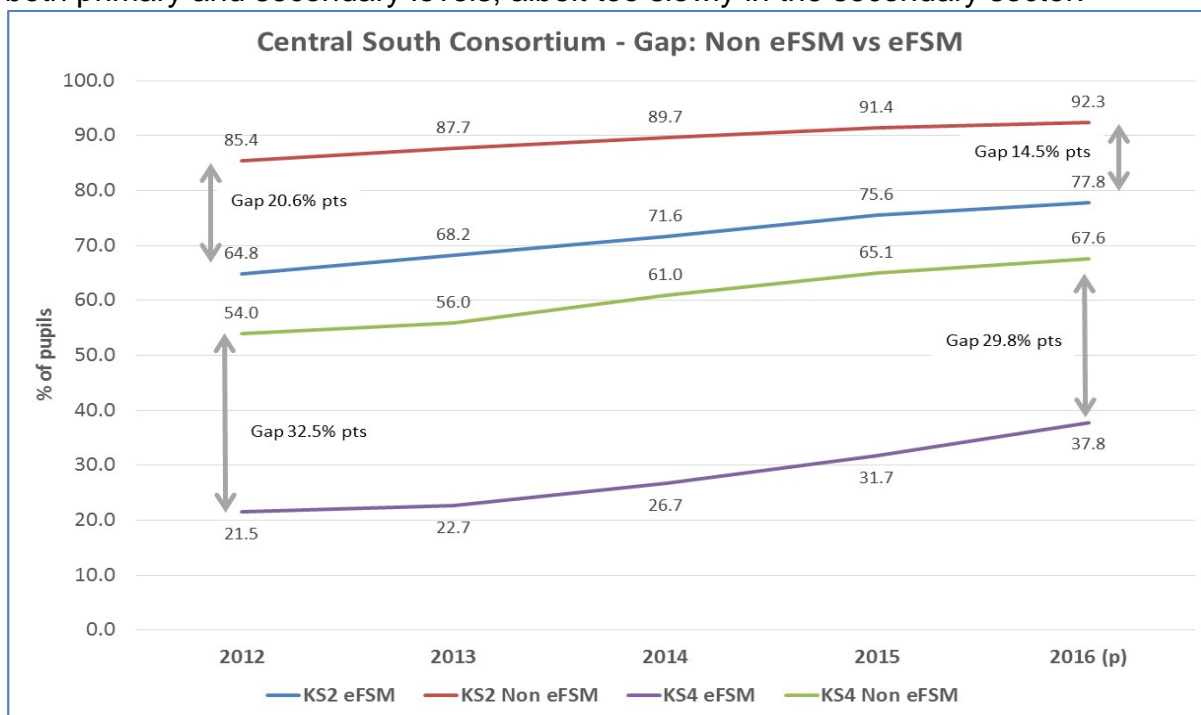
The performance of children claiming free school meals (e-FSM) has improved in each local authority, however, the gap remains stark compared with children not claiming free school meals (non e-FSM).



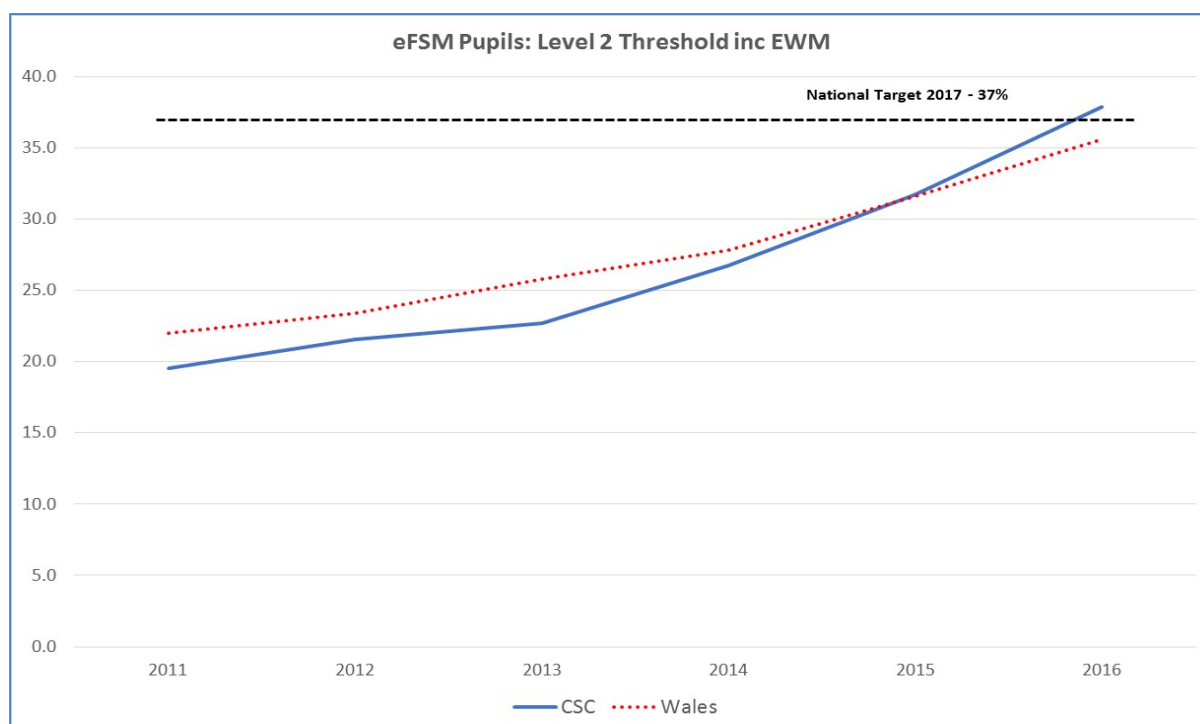
There are particular issues across the region relating to boys' performance in literacy/English/Welsh, and girls' performance in mathematics/numeracy which are first identified within the Foundation Phase and continue to the end of Key Stage 4.



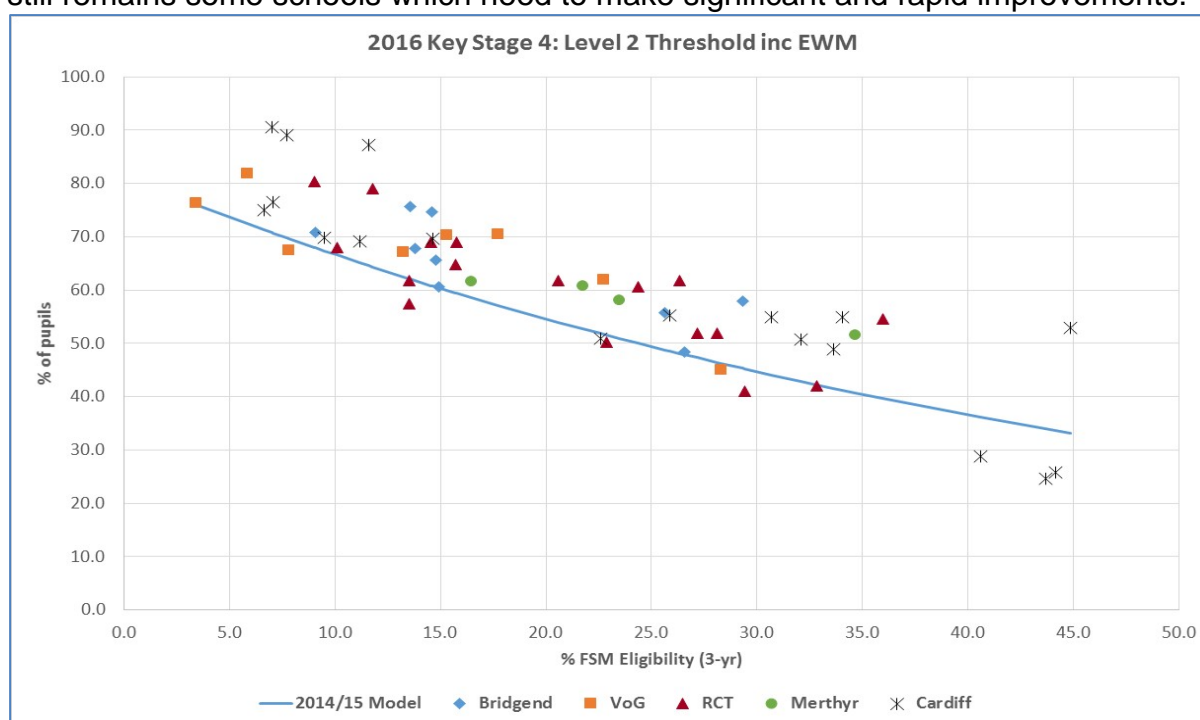
The gap between the performance of pupil's e-FSM and their peers is narrowing at both primary and secondary levels, albeit too slowly in the secondary sector.



The outcomes of e-FSM pupils' have improved at a faster rate across this region and sits above the National Average and exceed the Welsh governments' target a year early.



Schools in all contexts have improved against the trend position in 2014/15 but there still remains some schools which need to make significant and rapid improvements.



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