

Initial View of Performance in Cardiff Schools 2014-2015

Report to Scrutiny – 15th September 2015

Introduction

1. This report provides an initial analysis of educational outcomes for the academic year 2014-2015 and identifies the main strengths and shortcomings in performance. Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 results are final, based upon actual performance data published by Welsh Government. Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 analysis is based upon the provisional results reported by schools. In some aspects the results are still incomplete or awaiting the outcome of appeals. Results in all phases for FSM pupils are also provisional, pending publication of final FSM outcomes by Welsh Government in December 2015.

Overview of outcomes

2. These results for the 2014-2015 academic year build on the improvements seen last year. They indicate that the actions put in place to address longstanding shortcomings in provision are now having a positive impact on improving outcomes for learners. Standards of attainment continue to improve in all key stages and in many indicators at a faster rate than across Wales as a whole. Despite this strengthening picture, outcomes at the end of each key stage are not yet high enough.
3. In the Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2 the rate of improvement has increased in Cardiff in each of the past three years, whilst across Wales the rate of improvement has slowed. Cardiff is now at least in line with the national average in all the main indicators in the primary phase.
4. At Key Stage 3 performance is still improving albeit the rate of improvement has slowed. At Key Stage 4, outcomes improved in nearly all the main indicators. In the level 2+ threshold Cardiff's performance increase rose again, making a 9 percentage point (ppt) improvement over the last two years. Whilst there has also been improvement in the wider level 2 measure, the rate of improvement on this and the currently available data on the level 1 measure are of continuing concern in a number of secondary schools.
5. An increasing number of pupils of all ages attain the highest levels at each key stage. Girls continue to outperform boys at all key stages, but the gap in performance has reduced in Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3. The difference in performance of pupils who are eligible for free school meals (FSM) and those not eligible (nFSM) is reducing at each key stage. The difference is smallest in the Foundation Phase but widens at each successive key stage. This year's comparative performance of FSM pupils in Cardiff is not yet available but in 2014 FSM pupils' performance was in line with the national average at all key stages.
6. Against this overall improving picture there is evidence that some pupil groups are not similarly improving, with the attainment of looked after children (LAC), those on free school meals (FSM), learners with English as an Additional Language (EAL), and some groups of boys being of particular concern.

7. There also remain concerns around some lower attaining schools in challenging contexts where results have fallen, or where outcomes continue to place the school in the lowest benchmarking quarter.

Factors Impacting on Outcomes

8. Over the last two years there has been a concerted effort to focus on increasing the transparency of data and changing the performance culture so that individual school data is shared in order to raise expectations across all areas of the city.
9. Outcomes in schools where headline figures have been relatively high, but significant levels of underachievement existed (higher attaining but lower achieving), have been increased, some significantly so, through improved challenge and support.
10. A more robust working relationship between the local authority and the consortium is ensuring that schools receive the appropriate degree of challenge. Brokered school to school working is increasing the range of effective support available to meet schools' needs, in particular enabling improving schools to gain first hand access to good practice which they can replicate or adapt in their own context.
11. In previously lower attaining primary schools, in challenging contexts, a robust focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning has accelerated the progress made by learners, particularly in the Foundation Phase and Lower Key Stage 2. The transference of best practice through school to school support is raising expectations of both pupil progress and end of key stage attainment.
12. Strategies to accelerate the progress of particular pupils and pupils groups are also beginning to be integrated into mainstream practice. The approaches learned through such interventions are beginning to be incorporated into lessons as a 'scaffold' for pupils to use to progress their learning, resulting in improved outcomes.
13. In nine secondary schools, the results in the level 2+ threshold were less than expected. In all but one of these schools this stems from lower than expected performance in mathematics. In this subject particularly, the accuracy of teacher assessment is still not secure.
14. The markedly low performance in three secondary schools where the local authority has now taken intervention action has had a negative impact on the city's overall performance, attendance and exclusion figures.

Foundation Phase

15. The proportion of pupils achieving the Foundation Phase Outcome Indicator (FPOI) is 86.7% (2015 target 85.8%). The improvement in the FPOI is 3 ppt which is greater than the national improvement (1.6ppt) and brings the local authority in line with the Wales average (86.8%) for this indicator. This degree of improvement has been achieved against a background of increasing numbers of English as an additional language (EAL) learners.



16. The strongest area of learning continues to be Personal and Social Development Wellbeing and Cultural Diversity (PSDWCD) and the weakest area Language, Literacy and Communication - English (LLCE). This is the case for both outcome 5 (the expected level) and outcome 6. In all areas of learning at least one third of pupils attain the higher level.
17. The difference in performance between FSM pupils and nFSM pupils has been reduced again this year from 15.3 ppt to 13.3 ppt as the performance of FSM pupils has improved by more than 4 ppt.
18. Two thirds of primary schools (65 out of 95) maintained or improved the FPOI in 2015 compared to 2014. In the remaining third (30 out of 95) the proportion of pupils achieving the FPOI fell by an average of 4.25 ppt. In twelve schools, the decrease is less than 3ppt. Four schools are categorised as red or amber and action is already being taken to raise standards. In the remaining schools the challenge adviser will visit early in the term to scrutinise each school's analysis of outcomes and the actions that are planned in response.
19. The improvements in performance in the majority of schools have led to an increase in the number of schools in the top benchmarking quarter from 14 in 2014 to 21 in 2015 and a reduction in the number of schools in the lowest quarter from 17 to 9.

2014 Benchmark quarters for FPOI

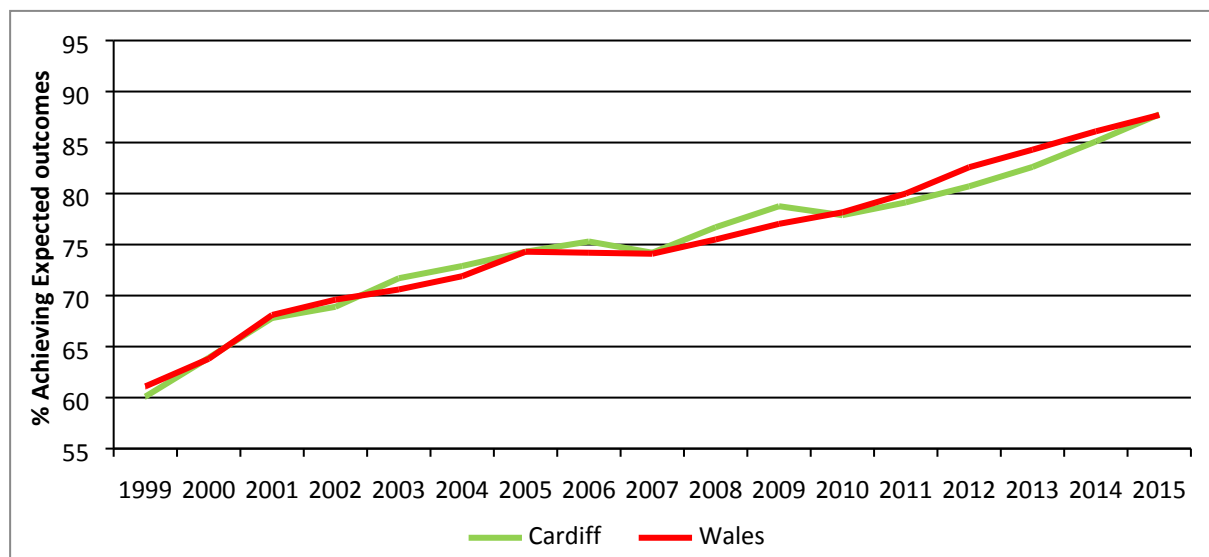
| | No of schools | % of schools |
|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| Quarter 1 | 14 | 14.74 |
| Quarter 2 | 32 | 33.68 |
| Quarter 3 | 32 | 33.68 |
| Quarter 4 | 17 | 17.89 |
| Total | 95 | 100.00 |

2015 Benchmark quarters for FPOI

| | No of schools | % of schools |
|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| Quarter 1 | 21 | 22.11 |
| Quarter 2 | 32 | 33.68 |
| Quarter 3 | 33 | 34.74 |
| Quarter 4 | 9 | 9.47 |
| Total | 95 | 100.00 |

Key Stage 2

20. There has been a similar improvement in the percentage of pupils reaching the expected level at Key Stage 2. In 2015 the improvement in the core subject indicator (CSI) is 2.7ppt which is greater than the national improvement (1.6ppt). The proportion of pupils achieving the CSI is now 87.8% (2015 target 86.5%) which is in line with the national figure of 87.7%.



21. The highest performance is in Welsh first language with mathematics and English having the lowest performance at this key stage. At level 5 performance is highest in Welsh and lowest in English. At least four out of every ten pupils attain the higher level in all subjects which is at least in line with the proportion of pupils across Wales as a whole.
22. The difference in performance between FSM pupils and nFSM pupils has been reduced again this year from 17.5 ppt to 14.3 ppt (2015 target 16.2%) as the performance of FSM pupils has improved by nearly 5 ppt.
23. Nearly two thirds of primary schools (62 out of 93) maintained or improved their Key Stage 2 CSI in 2015 compared to the previous year. In the remaining third (31 out of 93) the proportion of pupils achieving the CSI fell by an average of 6.5 ppt. In nine schools, the decrease is less than 3ppt. Four schools are categorised as red or amber and action is already being taken to raise standards.
24. The improvements in performance in the majority of schools have led to an increase in the number of schools in the top benchmarking group from 15 in 2014 to 21 in 2015 and a reduction in the number of schools in the lowest group from 15 to 14. In 9 of these 14 schools there has been persistent low achievement and focused action is being taken.

2014 Benchmark quarters for KS2 CSI

| | No of schools | % of schools |
|-----------|---------------|--------------|
| Quarter 1 | 15 | 16.13 |
| Quarter 2 | 28 | 30.11 |
| Quarter 3 | 35 | 37.63 |

2015 Benchmark quarters for KS2 CSI

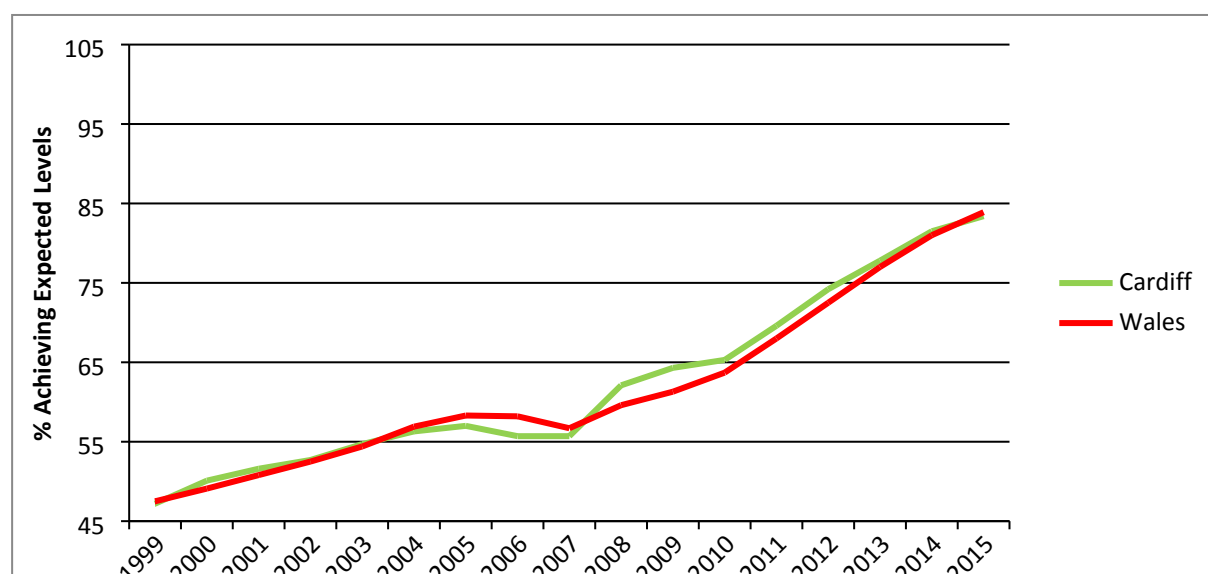
| | No of schools | % of schools |
|-----------|---------------|--------------|
| Quarter 1 | 21 | 22.58 |
| Quarter 2 | 28 | 30.11 |
| Quarter 3 | 30 | 32.26 |

| | | |
|------------------|----|--------|
| Quarter 4 | 15 | 16.13 |
| Total | 93 | 100.00 |

| | | |
|------------------|----|--------|
| Quarter 4 | 14 | 15.05 |
| Total | 93 | 100.00 |

Key Stage 3

25. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected level at this key stage also continues to increase although the rate of improvement has slowed. In 2015 the proportion of pupils achieving the CSI was 83.4%, an improvement of 1.9ppt on the 2014 figure. The improvement was smaller than the national improvement (2.9ppt).



26. At this key stage the highest performance is in Welsh first language and the weakest performance is in English. At the higher levels (level 6 and level 7) there have been significant improvements in each of the core subjects.
27. The difference in performance, at this key stage, between FSM pupils and nFSM pupils has been reduced again this year from 22.4 ppt to 21.6 ppt. However the gap is significantly wider than in the primary phase.
28. Two thirds of secondary schools (14 out of 19) maintained or improved their Key Stage 3 CSI in 2015 compared to the previous year. In the remaining third the proportion of pupils achieving the CSI fell by up to 5 ppt (with the exception of one secondary school which fell by nearly 19ppt).
29. The improvements in performance in the majority of schools have led to an increase in the number of schools in the top benchmarking group from 5 in 2014 to 8 in 2015 and a reduction in the number of schools in the lowest group from 6 to 3.

Benchmark quarters for KS3 CSI

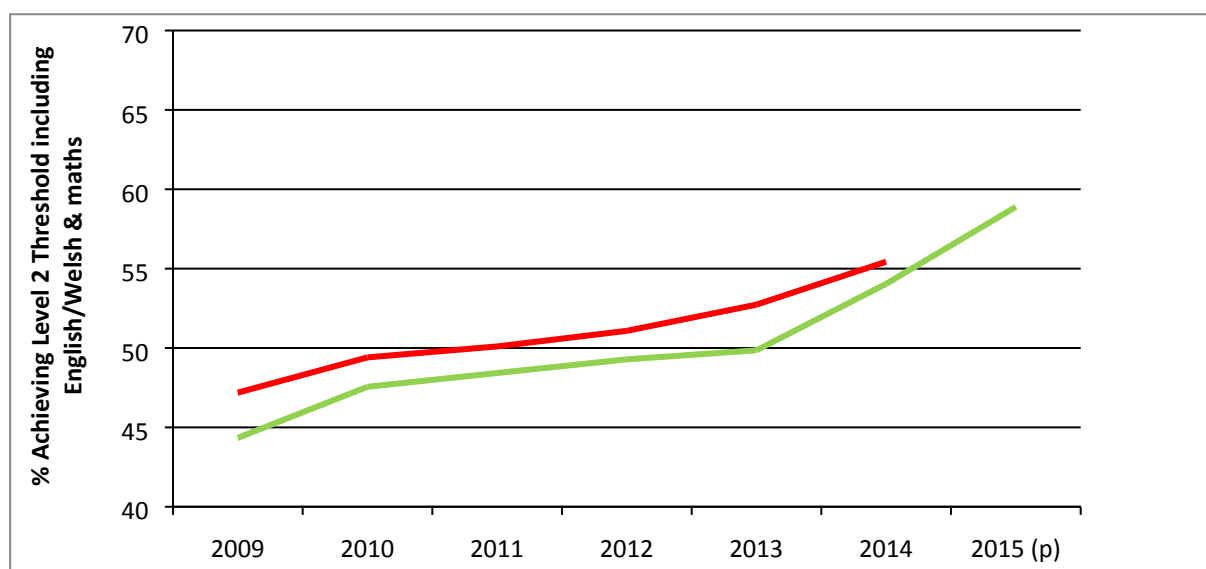
| | No of schools | % of schools |
|------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Quarter 1 | 5 | 27.78 |
| Quarter 2 | 5 | 27.78 |
| Quarter 3 | 2 | 11.11 |
| Quarter 4 | 6 | 33.33 |
| Total | 18 | 100.00 |

Benchmark quarters for KS3 CSI

| | No of schools | % of schools |
|------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Quarter 1 | 8 | 42.11 |
| Quarter 2 | 4 | 21.05 |
| Quarter 3 | 4 | 21.05 |
| Quarter 4 | 3 | 15.79 |
| Total | 19 | 100.00 |

Key Stage 4

30. The improvements seen in Key Stage 3 over the last few years have been translated, in the last two years, into noticeable improvements at Key Stage 4. At the level 2+ threshold, there has been an improvement of 4.9 ppt to 58.9%, which is the biggest improvement in the consortium and 1 ppt greater than the improvement in 2014. However, in order to be in the top 25% performing authorities based on FFT estimates Cardiff's performance in this indicator would need to be 62.3%.



31. 8 out of 18 secondary schools met or exceeded their expected performance for the level 2+ threshold. In the 10 schools where performance was below expectation, 4 schools had outcomes below expectation by more than 5 percentage points.
32. However, four out of every ten pupils still end their compulsory education without having achieved five good GCSEs including English/ Welsh and mathematics. In five schools more than half of the pupils failed to reach the level 2+ threshold, and in three schools it was more than seven out of every ten pupils.
33. In 2015 a similar improvement was made in the level 2 threshold, but on this wider measure performance remains further below where it should be given the very low standards previously. At present there appears to be a worrying decrease in the level 1 threshold as not all qualifying accreditations have been taken into account when the initial results were collected from schools. There continues to be little correlation between school outcomes in these measures and the proportion of FSM pupils. This strongly suggest that any differences reflect the variation in provision within schools, in terms of a suitable curriculum offer and rigour in tracking the progress of all pupils, not just those near the level 2+ threshold.
34. There were also improvements in outcomes in the individual subjects of mathematics, English, Welsh and science at level 2. These improvements were smaller than that achieved in the level 2+ threshold which suggests that schools are becoming more effective at reducing the number of pupils that achieve level 2 in only one of mathematics or English/Welsh but not both. The improvements in schools'

pupil tracking processes, in combination with successful intervention have improved schools' effectiveness in this area. Challenge advisers have also been more robust in testing the validity of the data.

Key Stage 5

35. The proportion of subject entries at A* or A was 31.1% and at A*-C the proportion was 78.4%. These figures represent increases of 3.7 and 1.3 ppt respectively on the figures for 2014. At A*-E, considered the 'pass rate', the proportion of subject entries was 98.1%. The proportion of students achieving the level 3 threshold was 97.0%. Both figures are similar to those achieved in 2014.
36. The results achieved at Key Stage 5 compare positively with the national figures for both Wales and England. The proportion of subject entries at A* or A was 23.1% in Wales and 25.9% across England. At A*-C the corresponding national figures were 74.3% and 77.2% respectively. The national pass rate in Wales was 97.3% whereas in England it was 98.1%

Attendance

37. Having improved significantly year on year since 2011, the 2014-2015 overall attendance figure for secondary schools remained the same as in the last academic year at 93.8%, which is identical to the Welsh average. This places Cardiff 11th out of the 22 local authorities in Wales for secondary school attendance. Seven schools achieved attendance above 95% compared to five last year. Notably poor attendance in three schools impacted significantly on the overall city data.
38. Primary schools will submit their statutory attendance returns later on in September. The latest figures available were for June 2015 and showed attendance of 95.3% which is 0.4 percentage points up on the 2014 figure of 94.9%. It is anticipated that July's final attendance will be in line with this figure. Overall, 56% of primary schools look to have achieved an attendance rate over 95% and 29% of schools achieved attendance of at least 96%.
39. The proportion of days missed, especially by secondary school age pupils, remains too high and in some cases clearly impacts on the standards attained by individual pupils and their schools. While there is clear evidence of the positive impact of the 5 step strategy which has been in place for a number of years now, improving attendance in schools at all phases remains a priority.

Exclusions

40. Cardiff exclusion rates continue to fall overall against key performance indicators, with significant reductions in the fixed term exclusions per 1000 pupils in both secondary and primary phases. There were four permanent exclusions in 2014/15.
41. There were fixed term exclusions in around one third of primary schools and in all secondary schools. The majority of secondary schools have low exclusions figures. However there were very high rates of exclusion in three schools in which the local authority has now taken intervention action. Six secondary schools have disproportionately high exclusion figures per 1000 pupils, with two further schools having exclusion figures above the Welsh average. In all schools with comparatively

high numbers of exclusions, more needs to be done to ensure that interventions short of exclusion are used effectively wherever possible.

Further Actions

42. Where schools continue to be positioned in the lowest benchmarking quarter detailed analysis is needed to establish the factors that are inhibiting progress. Decisive action is required in schools where shortcomings in leadership are the main contributory factors. There is a need to extend the scope of the most successful headteachers to take responsibility for more than one school.
43. In the lowest performing secondary schools there must be effective alignment of the role of the local authority, Schools Challenge Cymru and the consortium to ensure that the school improvement strategies currently being implemented are impacting positively on the rate of improvement and outcomes for learners.
44. Further challenge is needed in schools which continue to perform below their FFT estimates in relation to their target setting processes, pupil tracking systems and intervention strategies. Higher performing schools should increasingly be enabled and where necessary commissioned to support the improvement needed.
45. Continued focused action is needed to centrally identify and track pupils at risk of leaving school without qualifications and/or at risk of becoming NEET. Effective integration of the role of the challenge advisers and wider local authority support services is needed to ensure that the focus on improving threshold measures does not detract from schools' provision for all pupils, especially those most at risk.
46. In a number of primary schools, particular those with high levels of EAL learners and significant pupil mobility there is a need to address the underlying factors that impact negatively on pupils' outcomes in English, and to secure improved collaboration between central teams, and the consortium to support schools in addressing this.
47. There continues to be marked variations between schools in the attainment of FSM pupils. Concerted action is being taken across the consortium to address the persistent impact of poverty on attainment, including plans to ensure that all schools learn from the most effective practices.
48. Action will be needed to support secondary schools in developing the new curriculum to ensure that potential decreases in outcomes resulting from these changes are minimised. The current performance indicators at Key Stage 4 are due to change in 2017, and a much more restrictive range of qualifications eligible for inclusion in the new measures. The extent of the challenge for schools depends upon the extent to which vocationally-based, inclusive qualifications, such as BTECs, have formed part of the curriculum offer in the past.
49. Weaknesses in standards, provision and leadership persist in mathematics, particularly in the secondary phase. Plans to strengthen leadership and its impact on provision and standards are being implemented by the consortium through a core training programme, in school support and network meetings.

Glossary

Foundation Phase Outcome Indicator – Language, literacy and communication, mathematical development and personal and social development, well-being and cultural diversity in combination at outcome 5.

Core Subject Indicator - English/Welsh, mathematics and science in combination at level 4 in Key Stage 2 or at level 5 in Key Stage 3.

Expected Outcome – Foundation Phase outcome 5, Key Stage 2 level 4, Key Stage 3 level 5.

Expected Performance – Four times each year secondary schools submit their current assessments of year 11 attainment to the local authority via the consortium. The actual GCSE results published in August should be at least in line with the final submission in May.

Level 2+ threshold – Five A*-C grades at GCSE including English or Welsh and mathematics.

Benchmarking quarter – The Welsh Government places schools into five groups based on proportions of FSM pupils. Each group is then divided into four quarters based on the performance of schools within each group.

FFT estimates – Fischer Family Trust is an organisation that uses a range of available data to provide estimates of the most likely outcomes for a pupil given their prior attainment.

Level 3 threshold - Equivalent to the volume of 2 A levels at grade A-E.

Appendix

Comparative performance of FSM pupils

| | Cardiff All Pupils 2015 | Cardiff FSM 2015 | Cardiff FSM 2014 | Wales FSM 2014 |
|---|--------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| Foundation Phase Outcome Indicator | 86.7% | 76.7% | 72.2% | 72.4% |
| Key Stage 2 Core Subject Indicator | 87.8% | 76.7% | 71.6% | 71.9% |
| Key Stage 3 Core Subject Indicator | 83.4% | 66.5% | 63.5% | 61.3% |
| Key Stage 4 Level 2+ Threshold | 58.9%* | 30.7%* | 27.4% | 27.7% |

*Provisional data from schools