

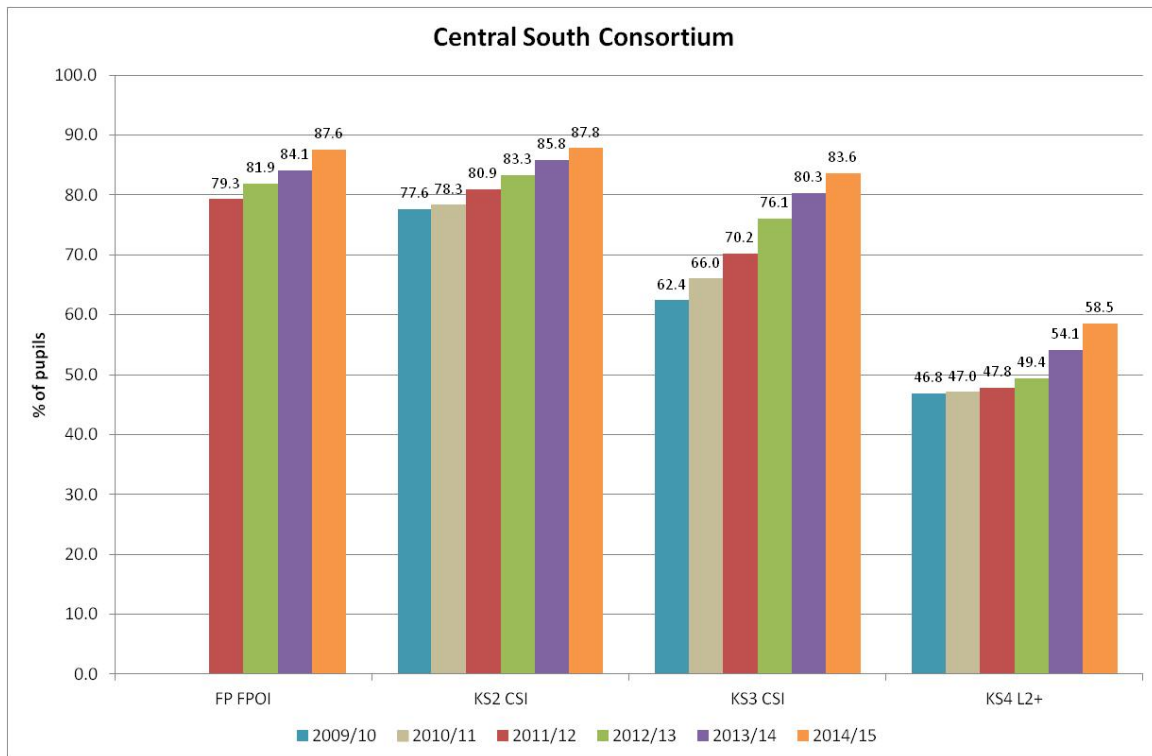
Central South Wales: A vision for a networked learning school system

Introduction

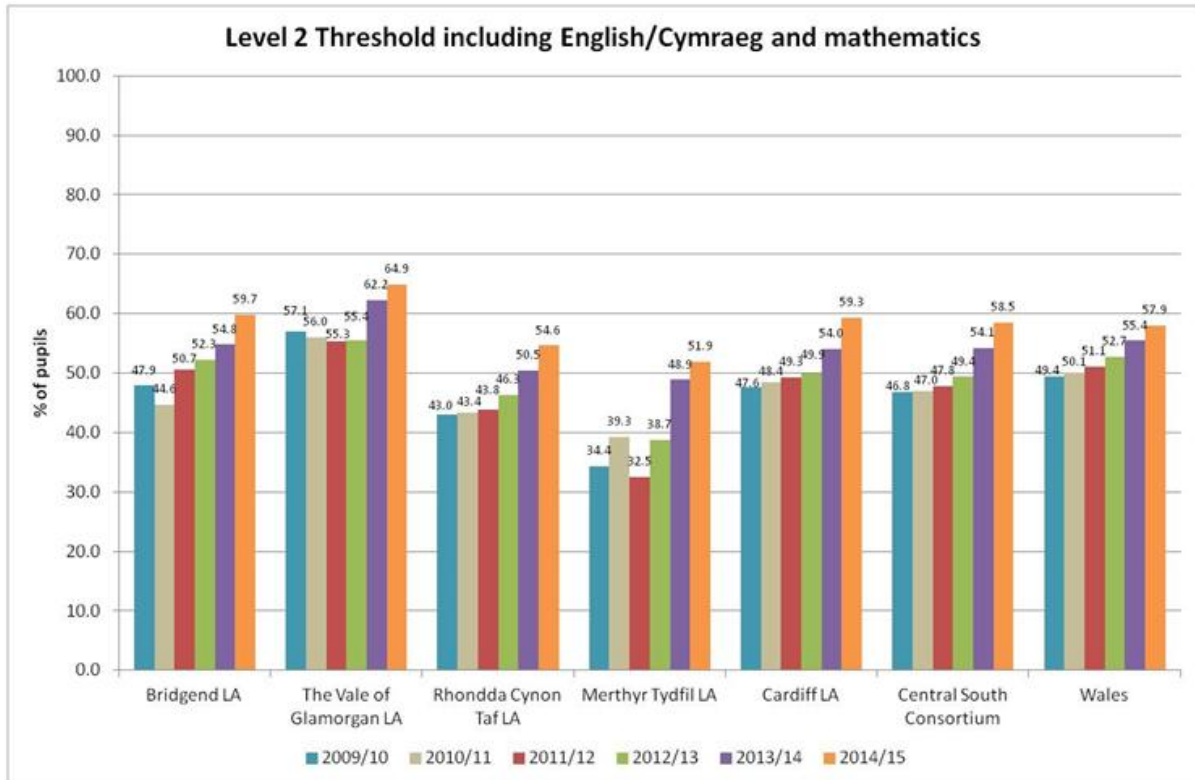
The region of Central South Wales is the most populous region of Wales. It covers over 400 schools and a third of the school age population of Wales - 135,000 school aged children. It is also the region that contains the highest number and proportion of children living in poverty.

Reaching from the post industrialised valleys in Rhondda Cynon Taf, Merthyr Tydfil and north Bridgend to the more affluent coastal regions of the Vale of Glamorgan and Cardiff the capital city, the success of schools in this region hold the key to future economic and social success of Wales.

Historically the region as a whole has underperformed against schools elsewhere in Wales. However since 2012 the region has seen steep and sustained improvement at every level and in every authority.



In 2015 pupils in schools across the Central South region again improved their outcomes significantly, setting a three year consistent upward trend of improvement at rates faster than the national rates of improvement. This was particularly evident at the Level 2+ indicator of 5x A*- Cs including English/Welsh and mathematics.



Inspection outcomes are also indicating improvement including in leadership and teaching and the outcomes of vulnerable children are improving faster than the average, closing, but not fast enough, the gap between those living in poverty and their peers.

The region, previously amongst the worst performing in Wales, now sits at or above the national average at every indicator.

Our vision: To build a self improving school system

Our ambition as a region is for schools in the Central South region to provide the best education for children across Wales and can rival their counterparts across the UK.

To do this we want to shift school improvement from a model that is dependent on central support to a by schools for schools model, building capacity for collective improvement across the system.

We want a system where schools care about improvement for all as much as for their own school.

And we are making good progress.

In January 2014, backed by the five authorities and drawing on international research, schools across the region led the way in launching a strategy to develop a 'self improving school system'. The strategy was based on six principles which are commonly found in successful school systems:

- Schools are communities where collaborative enquiry is used to improve practice;
- Groupings of schools engage in joint practice development
- Where necessary, more intensive partnerships support schools facing difficulties;
- Families and Community organisations support the work of schools;
- Coordination of the system is provided by school leaders;
- Local authorities work together to act as the 'conscience of the system'.

The strategy has been led by the Central South Wales Strategy group. All schools are part of School Improvement Groups (SIGs), there are 60 pathfinder partnerships in place, school improvement hubs provide professional learning and peer enquiry is developing leadership capacity. We have seen much progress in engagement and understanding of a self improving school system. Increasingly there is evidence of impact on capacity at system and school level and on attainment.

Taking our strategy forward

There remain a number of areas we need to further develop if we are to develop a sustainable system of school improvement which can support schools to be the best in Wales and beyond. These are:

1. More explicit opportunities to build **sustainable leadership capacity**, operating at a system level with the appropriate incentives to develop the best head teachers and a system to spot and develop talent for future leadership at a system level
2. Ways to develop **systematic, deeper professional learning opportunities** at all levels of the system as the norm for teachers across the region - with a tight focus on impact and disciplined routes of sharing learning across schools
3. A need to drive **harder forms of collaboration (including federations) to build capacity** in the system in leadership and teaching and learning and increase efficiency in the use of services by schools
4. Effective **consistent challenge and intervention** to drive change rapidly and robustly where it is most needed
5. Significant **work with governors and local elected Members** to improve the wider understanding about the benefits of hard collaborative school systems.

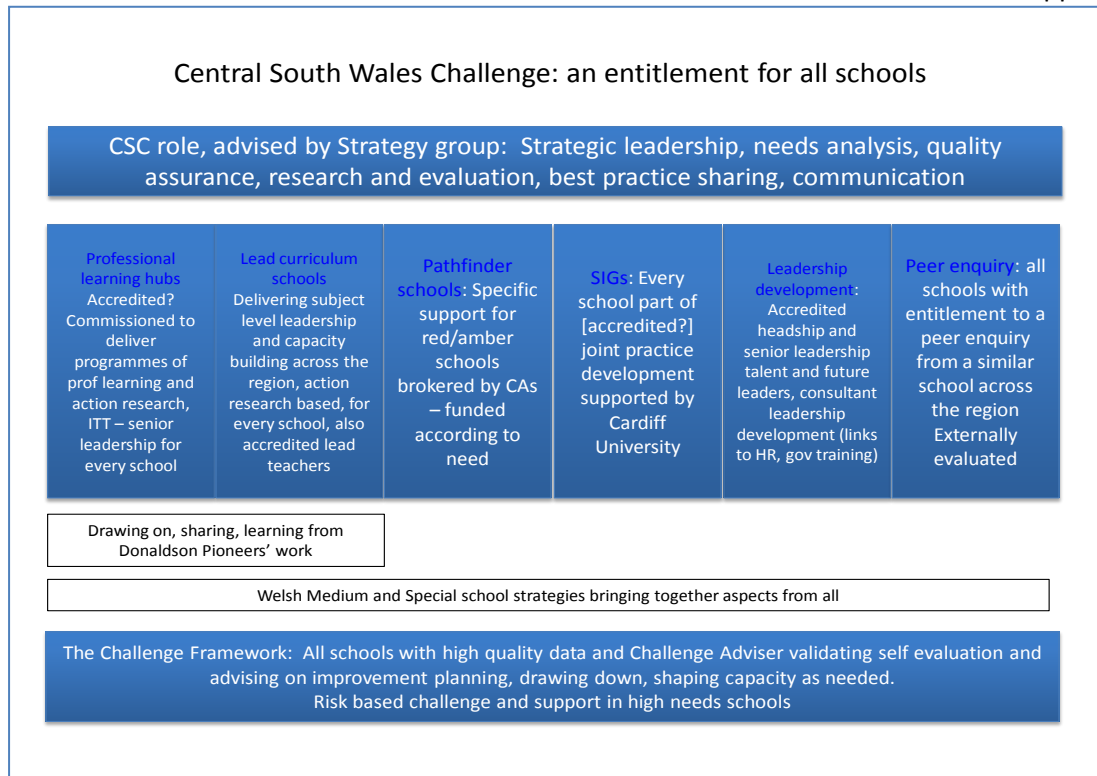
The 2018 vision

By 2018 we would expect the school improvement system to be radically transformed. We want to see a system of school improvement explicitly led, organised and provided by schools.

By September 2018: A Central South Wales networked learning community run by schools for schools which includes:

1. **All schools as part of an accredited school improvement group or network** which sets priorities each year, provides most school improvement support and evidences impact in capacity and pupil attainment across schools;
2. **Expert teachers working at subject level across and within the system from lead subject specialist schools** providing subject level support to all schools focused on need;
3. **Lead schools commissioned to develop professional learning programmes** for all school staff including initial teacher training, with joint practice development the predominant learning model. All lead schools working as part of the Successful Futures development model building the new curriculum into their practice;
4. **All schools able to commission a formal peer enquiry** from experienced trained peer enquirers (current Headteachers) as part their self evaluation and improvement planning;
5. **High quality leadership programmes for all heads, a future leaders programme and a 'system leadership' model** identifying and funding experienced heads empowered to work swiftly and rapidly with vulnerable schools with clear priorities for improvement.

This model might look like the below.



The networked learning community is underpinned by:

6. **Governors and local elected Members** engaged in and sharing principles of system level improvement as well as improvement in local school outcomes;
7. Authorities **work together to achieve a rapid increase in the number of formal federations** in place and to develop learning about the variety of models for achieving economies of scale between schools [moving towards a presumption in favour of federation where circumstances allow];
8. **The consortium, on behalf of authorities, identifies the needs of schools and quality assures support** provided across the system at a system level . It reduces its focus and staffing to work only with the most vulnerable schools to **support effective self evaluation and improvement planning intervening** rapidly and robustly where needed; and
9. The strategy is supported by a **strong emphasis on evaluation and research.**

This business plan is focused on the development of our vision and sets out the areas where we expect to make progress in responding to needs across the region in 2016/17.

Priorities for improvement in 2016/17

As we move towards the delivery of our vision in 2018, we continue to review the impact of our work in schools across the region. Our SER provides analysis of the areas of strength and improvement priorities for the region. This can be accessed [\[here\]](#).

In 2016/17 our delivery plan, based on our self evaluation, are set out in the following pages.

Our ambition in 2016/17 is:

To transform the outcomes of learners across the region so that schools in the region are the best performing in Wales and rival schools across the UK.

We will do this through a focus on two improvement priorities:

- 1. Improving the capacity of the system to be self improving; and by**
- 2. Further developing the Central South Consortium to be a high performing organisation.**

We have set out what this will mean we do in 2016/17. Each improvement objective is underpinned by a detailed plan which will be reported against in year.

Ambition in 2016/17: To transform the outcomes of learners across the region so that schools in the region are the best performing in Wales and rival schools across the UK. With particular focus on three areas:

- a. Improving standards in literacy
- b. Improving standards in numeracy
- c. Improving standards for vulnerable learners

This core improvement priority will be monitored through performance against the three areas. It will be delivered through our two areas for improvement set out below.

Core Improvement priority: To transform the outcomes of learners across the region so that schools in the region are the best performing in Wales and rival schools across the UK.	
Areas for action	What we will do in 2016/17
To raise standards in literacy/ English/ Welsh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the literacy skills of boys especially in writing and raise standards in language all authorities and especially Merthyr in the Foundation Phase and at key stages 2 and 3 • Improve performance at level 2 in English, especially for boys, and so increase outcomes further at L2+ • Improve performance in Welsh first language at GCSE
To raise standards in numeracy/ mathematics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the numerical reasoning skills of boys and girls • Improve the attainment of boys and girls in mathematics in all authorities in the Foundation Phase and key stages 2 & 3 • Improve performance at level 2 in mathematics for boys and especially for girls and so increase outcomes further against the level 2+ threshold
To improve the outcomes achieved by specific groups of learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the impact of poverty on educational attainment by improving the performance of eFSM pupils in all authorities, and especially in RCT and the Vale at the expected outcome/ level and the outcome/ level above • Meet the regional floor target for eFSM pupils in the primary sector and the national target at L2+ • Improve the proportion of more able pupils reaching the higher than expected outcomes/ grades (FP, KS2, KS3) and the higher examination grades at GCSE and at A level • Improve the attainment of other vulnerable groups (LAC, minority ethnic pupils, SEN pupils) • Improve performance against the level 1 threshold • Improve the attendance of pupils vulnerable to underachievement

Improvement Priority ONE

Further develop the capacity of the school system to be self improving through the Central South Wales Challenge. In particular by:

- a. Improving the quality of Leadership and Governance.
- b. Improving the quality of teaching and learning
- c. Reducing the variation between schools in the region

Improvement Priority ONE: Further develop the capacity of the school system to be self improving through the Central South Wales Challenge.

Areas for action	What we will do in 2016/17
To improve the quality of leadership and governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver, accredit and evaluate the first year of the leadership development programme to make sure all aspects of leadership are supported • Develop a policy with authorities to learn from and support the expansion of hard collaborative models including federations across the region • Develop new models of leadership through a consultant/systems leadership programme • Establish a senior leaders in education programme and evaluate • Use joint practice development and collaboration between schools to improve leadership at all levels, so every school is part of a high quality [accredited] school improvement group • Continue to develop joint practice at leadership level through the brokered pathfinder programme with evaluation • Roll out the peer review programme for all schools • Improve governance through training and the bespoke consultant governors • Establish a single governor training service for the region • Improve HR specialist advice services to schools • Develop a strategy for improvement across the Welsh Medium sector which is led by the sector
To improve the quality of learning and teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and share the key features of good and excellent learning and teaching across the region led by schools in the region • Use joint practice development to develop a continuum of professional learning pathways for all school based staff through hub/lead schools linked to the New Deal Pioneers developments as key preparation for the new curriculum • Work with Higher Education to provide classroom based initial teacher training and induction for NQTs • Develop learning and teaching at subject level led by Pioneer schools programmes including lead literacy and numeracy schools through lead schools in each subject including the Foundation Phase Alliance • Establish and accredit lead teachers at subject level to share practice • Develop and grow expertise across the region in effective strategies to close the gap for vulnerable children and evaluate progress • Improve consistency and reliability of teacher assessment • Deliver a consistent approach to funding 14-16 alternative provision through

	<p>delegation of the 14-19 grant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support schools' leaders to meet the requirements of change in the curriculum and external qualifications through support for new Qualifications and the Welsh Bacalaureate
<p>To reduce the variations in performance between schools</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share regular timely and high quality school level data and analysis with all schools and authorities as part of a joined up data strategy across the region • Review the effectiveness and efficiency of the Challenge and Review framework in supporting schools in inverse proportion to need and adjust accordingly • Review the target setting policy in line with new performance measures and performance maintaining high expectations at pupil level • Work with local authorities to intervene swiftly where there is insufficient progress, with clear roles and funding evidencing impact of action • Secure improvement at pace in red and amber support schools reflecting what works through effective intervention • Evidence how better brokerage of support, including sharing best practice, at a school and strategic level meets the needs of schools and is impactful • Strengthen the coordination of joint working with inclusion services to evidence stronger joined up challenge and support for vulnerable children • Evidence how the challenge and support of self-evaluation and improvement planning in green or yellow support schools improves capacity • Work collaboratively to achieve consistency in attendance strategies • Improve quality and consistency teacher assessment of with other consortia • Review the challenge framework and impact of challenge advisers alongside SCC with recommendations for long term planning

Improvement Priority TWO:

To develop as a high performing organisation, by:

- a. Improving performance management
- b. Reviewing and sharpening governance and accountability
- c. Evidencing effective use of resources.

Improvement Priority TWO: To develop as a high performing organisation	
Improvement objectives	What we will do in 2016/17
To improve performance management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set out the detail of strategic direction in planning over a two year period • Improve the provision of in year data and data at individual pupil level to support self-evaluation and strategic planning • Establish clear targets, success criteria and specific actions when planning and monitoring all improvement work including school-to-school support and central services and take corrective action where needed • Strengthen evaluation of the impact of programmes and sources of support and use the lessons learned to inform future practice • Evaluate and continue to improve procedures for individuals' performance management
To strengthen governance and accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with local authorities to improve further reporting to scrutiny committees and the sharing of effective practice between committees to promote consistency • Develop the role of the Advisory Board in influencing strategic direction, agreeing priorities for improvement and assuring quality • Review governance annually • Identify risk and report the effect of measures to mitigate risk • Consult with key stakeholders – headteachers, governors, pupils, local authorities, diocesan authorities, Higher and Further Education and business
To strengthen further the management of resources and improve efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to strengthen arrangements for monitoring the use and impact of financial resources against regional priorities with a systematic focus on value for money • Work with the three other regional consortia to share effective practice in learning from challenge advisers, school to school strategies and effective use of resources, identify opportunities to collaborate to build capacity and operate with maximum efficiency

How will we know we have made progress?**Target setting**

Our targets are based on those of schools set at pupil level incorporating benchmarks with additional challenge provided by Challenge Advisers against benchmarks.

[The final position on targets has yet to be completed, will be agreed through governing bodies by end of autumn term.]

Our 2016/17 targets are:

- Close the gap in outcomes for children and young people in poverty and for looked after children by [xxx] 2016/2017.
- Raise standards in English and Welsh first language and mathematics so that...
- Raise standards at key stage 4 in English by a further [2.0%pts] Welsh by [3.4%pts] and mathematics by [6.3%pts] by September 2016 compared with September 2015
- Improve outcomes at Level 2+ by at least a further 6.1% by September 2016 compared with September 2015.
- Improve attendance to reach an average of at least 95% in both sectors by September 2016.

Accountability for impact

This Business plan is underpinned by more detailed plans against each improvement priority. We evaluate progress against each area reporting termly to the Joint Committee. In addition we:

- Provide an annual SER to the Joint Committee each year and at least one performance report to Scrutiny Committees, ideally in January of each year.
- We produce a summary SER each term to the Advisory Board to collate our live in year evaluation activity against each areas of our business plan.
- Monitor a monthly dashboard against in year data collections as well as inspection.
- Review the performance of red and amber schools termly with authorities and provide a termly progress report to each authority ahead of a formal minuted progress report.
- In addition we report termly to the Welsh Government's Challenge and Review sessions.

Local authority Annexes

This business plan describes our core business which has been agreed with the five authorities and will be resourced according to need as set out in our framework of Challenge and Support. Alongside this business plan we produce each year a LA Annex which sets out the support or

dedicated work required in each LA which will be funded, led or resourced by the Consortium. This is agreed in the summer progress reviews and reviewed following the results in the early autumn term. LA progress reports update against these annexes.

Governance

Our Governance Model is as follows:

- The Joint Committee agrees strategy and business plan, and agrees and monitors budget and performance meets four times a year.
- Directors of Education meet monthly with a strategic decision making role and Operational Group also meets monthly to review the operational running of the organisation.
- The Advisory Board (half termly) has a role to review evaluation, value for money and impact and contains representatives of our Stakeholder Groups: Headteacher Representative Group, Governors Group and Directors Group.
- We report to each authorities' Scrutiny committee at least annually as part of an agreed annual joint scrutiny plan.

Resources

Our revenue assumptions incorporate a 5% efficiency saving each year of the next two years which may be used to recycle resources into bringing together regional services.

The budget for the organisation for 2016 – 2017 is outlined below. Local Authority contributions have been reduced by 5% from 15 / 16 levels. The actual apportionment by local authorities is based on the appropriate IBA’s published by Welsh Government as part of the 2015 / 16 revenue budget settlement.

CATEGORY	Proposed Budget 2016 – 2017 £
Expenditure	
Employees (including secondments and school led capacity building)	3,650,528
Premises	540,744
Transport	40,000
Supplies and Services	501,290
Repayment of Redundancy Costs	100,000
Commissioning (Additional Support to Schools)	0
Support Services	111,100
GROSS EXPENDITURE	4,943,662

INCOME	Proposed Budget 2016 – 2017 £
LA Contributions	4,195,662
Ty Dysgu Income	400,000
Grants & Other income	348,000
TOTAL INCOME	4,943,662
NET EXPENDITURE	0
<i>Budget to be confirmed at Joint Committee March 2016</i>	

Grant Assumptions [to be confirmed following allocation of grant by WG]

We will seek to increase our delegation to schools which last year reached 86% and will provide minimal efficient monitoring reports to Welsh Government against grant terms and conditions.