

Central South Consortium Contribution to Raising Standards in Cardiff Schools

Paper for Cardiff Scrutiny

January 2017

Background

1. Since 2012, the Central South Consortium has delivered aspects of school improvement services on behalf of the five authorities: Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf and the Vale of Glamorgan. This covers 400 schools, 30% of Wales's 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 one in four children claimed free school meals in 2016.
2. The service 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. Scrutiny Committees in each of the five authorities invite the Lead Officer for the authority to report on the performance of the schools in their authority and the contribution of the consortium at any stage during the year. An annual report from the consortium relating to progress in the previous academic year and priorities for the year ahead is also provided.

Central South Consortium Business Plan for the Financial Year 2016/17

4. 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/Welsh/English, numeracy/mathematics and improving the outcomes of the vulnerable learners fastest;
 - Improving the capacity of the system to be self improving, particularly improving leadership and governance, teaching and learning and effective challenge and support;
 - Develop the consortium to as a high performing organisation focusing on performance management, governance and effective use of resources.
5. The business plan includes stretching and ambitious targets based on those set in each local authority whilst also reflecting school target setting. Each local authority has agreed a local authority annex, which indicates the local authority's specific targets, reflecting those set in the post-inspection action plan or corporate education plan.
6. The business plan sets out how we aim to deliver these priorities 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. These include 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 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>

7. The consortium's self-evaluation process reviews regularly the impact of challenge and support and provides the Advisory Board and Joint Committee with an update on progress through a termly report. 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. This aims to provide evidence of impact over time on capacity in the system beyond the immediate school performance information.

Performance across the Central South region in 2016

8. 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 key stages 1, 2 and 4. Standards for the most vulnerable children continued to rise fastest in the region when compared with Wales at all key stages. In particular, children living in poverty perform better in the Central South region than across the rest of Wales at key stage four.
9. In 2015/16, the proportion of schools in statutory inspection categories (significant improvement and special measures) is lower than the national proportion for that year (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 statutory category or required other inspection follow up compared to the national position. In contrast, primary schools' inspection profile is significantly better than the national picture.
10. 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.
11. During the 2015/16 year, three local authorities in the region were removed from an Estyn follow-up category. Merthyr Tydfil was removed from special measures, Cardiff from significant improvement 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.
12. The consortium was inspected by Estyn in March 2016. The inspection report recognised progress in establishing a 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 support for 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.

Consortium Self - evaluation and Business Planning 2017/18

13. The Consortium business planning process for 2017/18 is well underway and will be brought to the Joint Committee in March 2017.
14. 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 areas for improvement. Strategic challenges for the Consortium include the need to work with others across Wales and with the 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 some 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 the challenge associated with meeting 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 Spring 2017, which emphasise a need for services to be delivered collaboratively across authorities and regions.
15. 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.
 - 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 improving but can improve further particularly at 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 the classroom level.
 - There is more to do to build system leadership behaviours from many headteachers.
 - 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.
16. The business plan for financial year 2017/18 will set out how the organisation will, as far as possible, respond to strategic challenges and address areas for improvement

along with the Estyn recommendations through a detailed resourced plan developed with input from schools, staff and local authorities.

17. 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 increase delegation rates (currently 92% of EIG is delegated to schools) further than in previous years. This will look also at how the retained top slice which is increasingly used to fund schools to provide support might be reduced further. In addition, the Welsh Government provides grant to the Consortium to deliver specific national priorities, normally through school-led projects.
18. The final business plan for the financial year 17/18 will be presented to the Joint Committee for approval in March 2017. The plan will have five areas of focus:
 - a. improving outcomes for vulnerable learners through effective partnership work with inclusion services;
 - b. delivering curriculum reform through school-to-school working;
 - c. improving leadership, governance and workforce reform;
 - d. rapid and sustainable intervention; and
 - e. delivering value for money.
19. Again, each local authority has participated in establishing the priorities and constructing the business plan. Local authority annexes will continue, budget permitting, where the business plan does not meet the specific requirements from the local authorities set out in their own corporate education plan.

Performance in Cardiff Schools

20. In Cardiff, results for the 2015-2016 academic year build on the improvements seen last year. Since 2013 there has been acceleration in the performance of Cardiff 'schools across all phases of education. This indicates that the actions of schools, the local authority and consortium combined have consolidated and further improved provision and outcomes for learners. However, there remains too much variation between schools, particularly in the secondary sector. Despite the strengthening picture across the board, outcomes at the end of key stage 4, particularly for eFSM pupils and in the level 1 and level 2 thresholds, are not yet high enough.
21. Across the primary phase, there has been an increase in the number of schools in the highest benchmarking quarter and a corresponding decrease in the number of schools in the lowest benchmarking quarter.
 - a. In the Foundation Phase and key stage 2 the rate of improvement over the last four years in Cardiff is greater than across Wales as a whole. Cardiff is now ahead of the national average in the two main indicators in the primary phase. In the Foundation Phase Outcome Indicator (FPOI) the difference is almost two percentage points (2 ppt), in the core subject indicator (CSI) at key stage 2 the difference is nearly 1 ppt.
 - b. At key stage 3 performance in the CSI is still improving and the rate of improvement has increased this year.

- c. At key stage 4 outcomes improved in all the main indicators. In the level 2+ threshold Cardiff's performance rose by 3 ppt, making a 12 ppt improvement over the last three years. The wider level 2 measure continues to improve but the rate of improvement is too slow (2.8 ppt this year). Following the fall in the level 1 indicator in 2015, the current data shows an increase of 2.8 ppt to 94.9% which also represents an increase on that achieved in 2014. The number of secondary schools where less than 50% of pupils achieve five GCSEs grades A*-C including English or Welsh and mathematics has decreased from eight in 2015 to four this year.
- d. At post 16 the proportion of subject entries at A* or A fell slightly but the proportion achieving A*-C and A*-E increased. All measures compare favourably with the national averages.
- e. 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 and there has been an improvement this year, at the expected level, in the comparative performance of girls with national averages. The performance of girls across Cardiff is now at least in line with the performance of girls across Wales.
- f. Outcomes for vulnerable learners, such as eFSM pupils and the overall performance of minority ethnic pupils, have improved.
- g. The proportion of SEN pupils at school action and school action plus, achieving headline measures improved in every key stage.

Challenge and support provided by the Consortium on behalf of Cardiff

- 22. In 2016/17 Cardiff Council spent £1,571,022 on core funding relating to the consortium's core function. In addition to the core costs of the consortium this has provided funding for a team of challenge advisers, Schools Challenge Cymru advisers, and a senior challenge adviser. Funding for the Cardiff annexe to meet the specific requirements of the local authority in 2015/16 was £50,280.
- 23. Inspection outcomes during 2015/16:
 - a. Eighteen schools were inspected with five being placed into the Estyn monitoring category. These schools were All Saints Primary, Bryn Hafod Primary, Llanishen High School, Radyr Comprehensive School and Whitchurch High School. Four schools were placed in the Local Authority monitoring category: Hywel Dda Primary, Rumney Primary, St Mary's RC Primary and Ysgol Bro Eirwg. One school required special measures: Woodlands Special High School.
 - b. The remaining schools achieved good or excellent outcomes in their inspections: Birchgrove Primary, Greenway Primary, Llysfaen Primary, St Paul's Primary, Ysgol Mynydd Bychan, Kitchener Primary and Severn Primary.
 - c. Schools removed from Estyn monitoring included: Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Plasmawr, Llanishen High and Radnor Primary.
 - d. Schools removed no longer requiring significant improvement included: Fairwater Primary, Christ the King Primary, St Cuthbert's RC Primary and Adamsdown Primary.
 - e. Schools removed from Local Authority monitoring included: Coed Glas Primary, Corpus Christ High School, Gabalfa Primary, Lakeside Primary and St Mary's RC Primary. Glan Yr Afon Primary remained in Local Authority monitoring.
 - f. The quality of leadership, including governance, as judged in Estyn inspections, is stronger overall in primary schools than in secondary schools. The updated figures for 2016, measured cumulatively since September 2011, show that Estyn

inspections continue to judge that leadership and management in primary schools are judged as good or excellent in 75% of cases. The equivalent figure for secondary schools fell from 55% in 2015, to around 48% in 2016 based on a small sample of schools inspected annually.

24. Elected Members will be aware that we use a categorisation process to identify the schools in need of support using both data and judgement of leadership and capacity to improve. During 2015/16, the consortium worked closely on behalf of the local authority to monitor the progress of the schools in need. In 2015/16 ten schools required the red level of support and twenty-three schools required the amber level of support.
25. Challenge advisers have a relevant educational background and 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. Cardiff receives the equivalent of 8.96 full-time challenge advisers. This has led to improvements in standards, provision and leadership in many of Cardiff's schools.
26. The recent categorisation outcomes were published 31st January 2017. In the primary sector there are two schools requiring the red level of support three secondary schools and one special school. There are thirteen primary schools receiving amber support, five secondary schools and two special schools. Improvement is evident in schools across the city. Over the last two years there has been a significant increase in the number of both primary and secondary schools in the top two standards groups. There continues to be a greater proportion of the city's primary schools in standards groups 1 and 2, than is the case in Cardiff's secondary schools.
27. Support provided by the consortium to schools in Cardiff has included:
 - a. Retained EIG partly funds literacy and numeracy support. This includes 20 primary schools in receipt of intensive literacy support and 9 primary schools in receipt of intensive numeracy support. Five secondary schools receive intensive literacy/English support and four receive intensive numeracy/mathematics support. In addition, direct funding has been provided in some cases. The impact of this support is reported through the progress monitoring arrangements of schools receiving red and amber levels of support.
 - b. Seventeen primary schools and 10 secondary schools have accessed professional development programmes provided by Hub schools across the region. Eighteen of Cardiff's secondary schools and 11 primary schools are involved in providing support as part of the Hub programme. These include Bishop of Llandaff High School, Cardiff High School, Mary Immaculate High School, Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Bro Ederyn, Radyr Comprehensive School, Fitzalan High School.
 - c. Fifteen primary schools and one secondary school in Cardiff are lead schools in pathfinder pairings. Seven primary schools, 1 secondary school and 2 special schools are receiving support through pathfinder pairings. These are red and amber schools and the impact of this support is monitored and evaluated through the red and amber schools progress reporting. Consequently the number of red and amber schools has reduced in Cardiff.

- d. Due to the proportionally high number of schools, Cardiff is represented in 28 of the region's 32 primary School Improvement Groups (SIGs). Twelve of Cardiff's primary head teachers are convenors for these groups. During 2015/16 SIGs including Cardiff schools have focused on: literacy, numeracy, numerical reasoning, teaching and pedagogy, pupil voice, science, closing the gap, leadership, wellbeing, ICT and digital curriculum framework and assessment. The work of SIGs is reviewed annually and SIGs have to provide a report on their priorities and impact against their priorities twice a year in order to be funded. Cardiff is represented in all six of the secondary SIGs. They are operating a system of SIGLETS where they distribute leadership across schools to groups that have a particular focus area. These include: English/ literacy, mathematics/ numeracy, gender gap, FSM, increasing A*-C grades/improving outcomes, LNF, curriculum change/design, reaching and learning, attendance/ family engagement, pupil voice, assessment, recording and reporting /assessment for learning, peer review/subject review, post 16, Welsh Bacc., special educational needs (SEN) and digital links.
- e. Nine schools in Cardiff hosted a peer enquiry in 2015-16. School leaders have engaged positively in the peer enquiry programme, which supports headteachers working in triads to review and evaluate areas of focus in each school. The peer enquiry provides a detailed report on the strengths and areas for improvement. The schools involved in hosting a peer enquiry were: Millbank Primary, Rhydypenau Primary, Danescourt Primary, Cardiff High School, Tongwynlais Primary School, St Philip Evans RC Primary School, Mary Immaculate High School, Ty Gwyn Special School and Fitzalan High School.
- f. The consortium has invested heavily in leadership provision during 2015/16. This has included opportunities to support another school to improve their leadership capacity, coaching leaders or providing strategic leadership. This level of support has been provided and funded for one special school, five primary schools and three secondary schools. In addition to this, schools have accessed leadership training programmes. All 31 headteachers or acting headteachers in Cardiff who are new to headship have undertaken the New to Headship training programme, Twelve headteachers have undertaken the Strategic Headship programme. Seventeen headteachers have completed the Consultant Headship programme and three are currently undertaking this programme. Sixteen headteachers are on the Future Leadership programme. There have been 12 successful NPQH applicants all currently remaining in Cardiff schools, six of whom have secured headteacher posts in Cardiff and one an acting headteacher post in Cardiff. This year there are 17 NPQH applicants undergoing assessment.
- g. There have been four Schools Challenge Cymru Advisers in Cardiff working with six of the secondary schools. Support has been provided to meet the individual needs of schools through the Foundation Phase Alliance, Welsh development officers, consultant leaders, consultant governors and a consultant head teacher.

In summary

28. There has been improvement in 2016 in a number of areas where CSC has worked with the local authority to address key areas of concern:
 - Overall pupil outcomes in the main performance indicators at the expected and higher levels and at every key stage are above the national averages.

- Across the primary phase, there has been an increase in the number of schools in the highest benchmarking quarter and a corresponding decrease in the number of schools in the lowest benchmarking quarter.
- The performance of girls has increased at the end of each key stage and now compares favourably with the Welsh averages.
- Outcomes for vulnerable learners, such as eFSM pupils and the overall performance of minority ethnic pupils, have improved.
- Outcomes at key stage 4 in the Level 1, Level 2, and Level 2 inclusive threshold indicators have improved.
- The number of secondary schools where less than 50% of pupils achieve five GCSEs grades A*-C including English or Welsh and mathematics has decreased from eight in 2015 to four this year.
- The proportion of pupils with SEN at school action and school action plus, achieving headline measures improved in every key stage.
- The strong partnership between the authority and the regional consortium for school improvement provides a clear model of support and challenge for schools, which is proportionate to their level of need.
- The regional consortium provides a wide range of training of good quality for middle and senior leaders in schools.
- Nearly all schools in Cardiff are engaging purposefully with school-to-school working.
- The consortium works effectively with its local authority partners to share information about the performance of schools 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 head teachers and governors to provide evidence of progress.

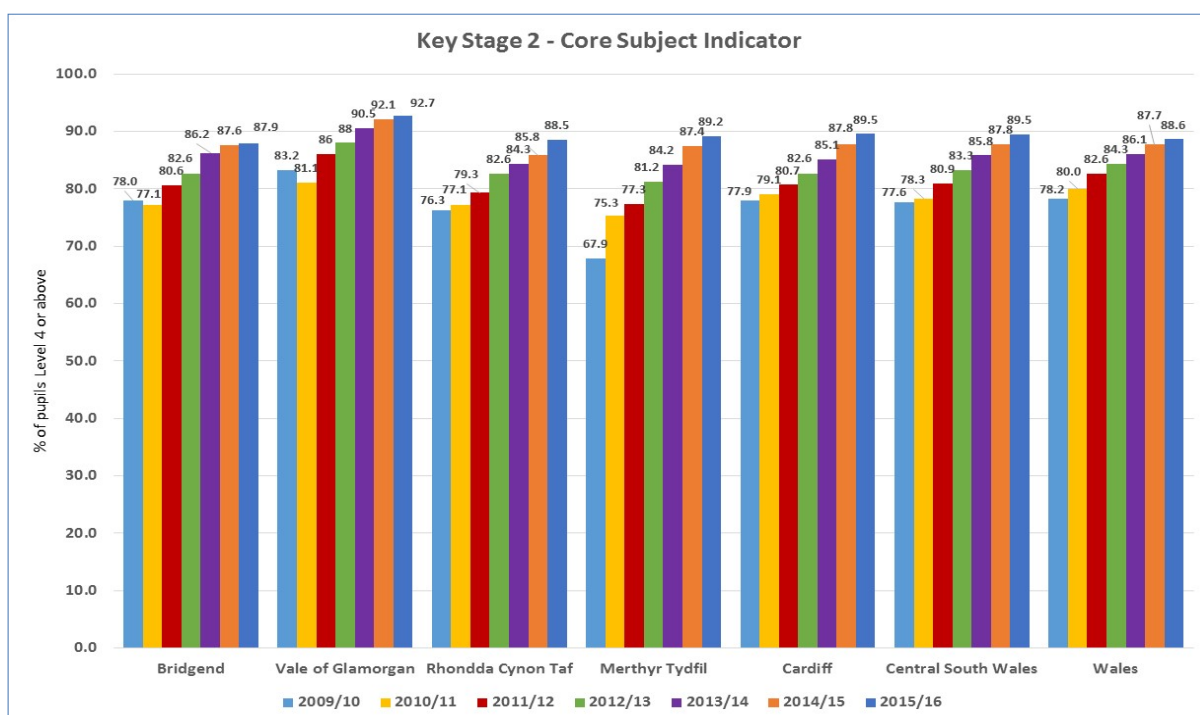
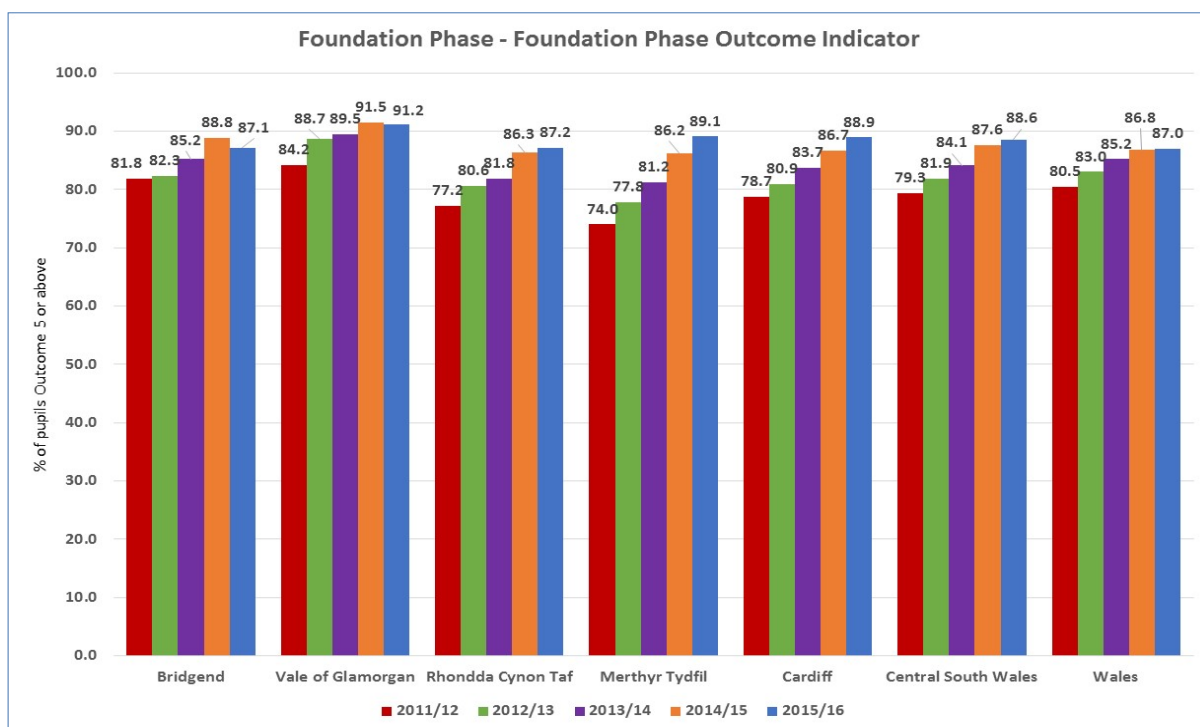
Areas for further improvement:

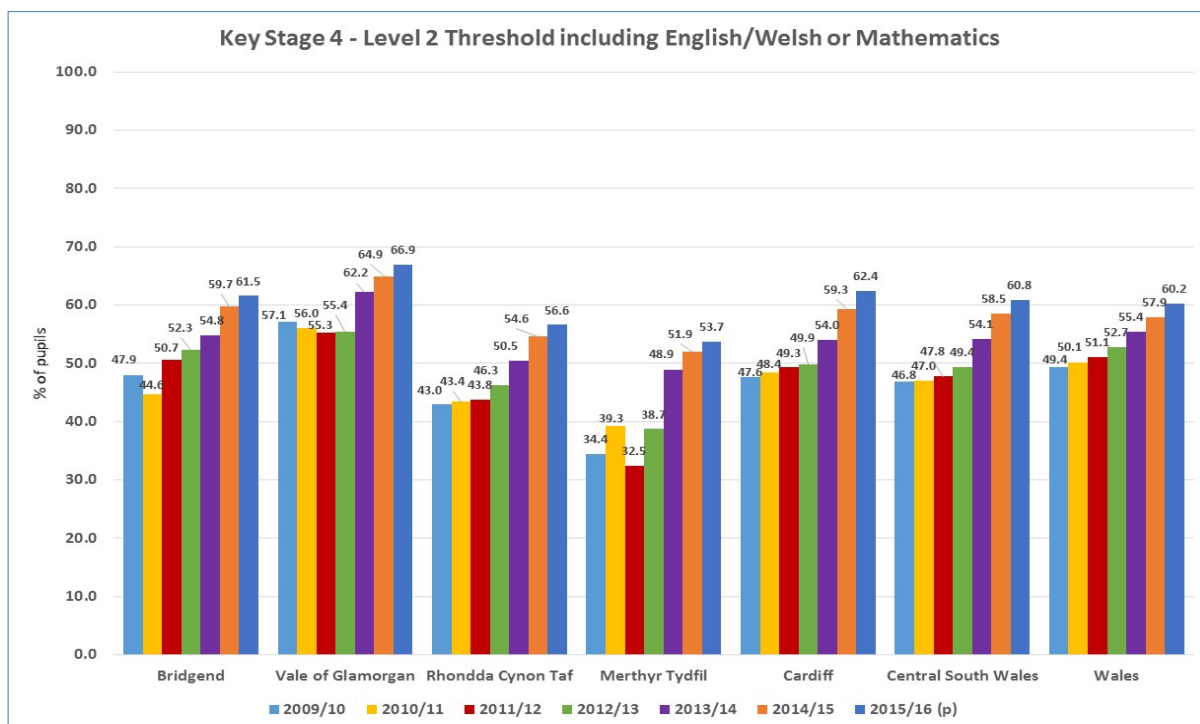
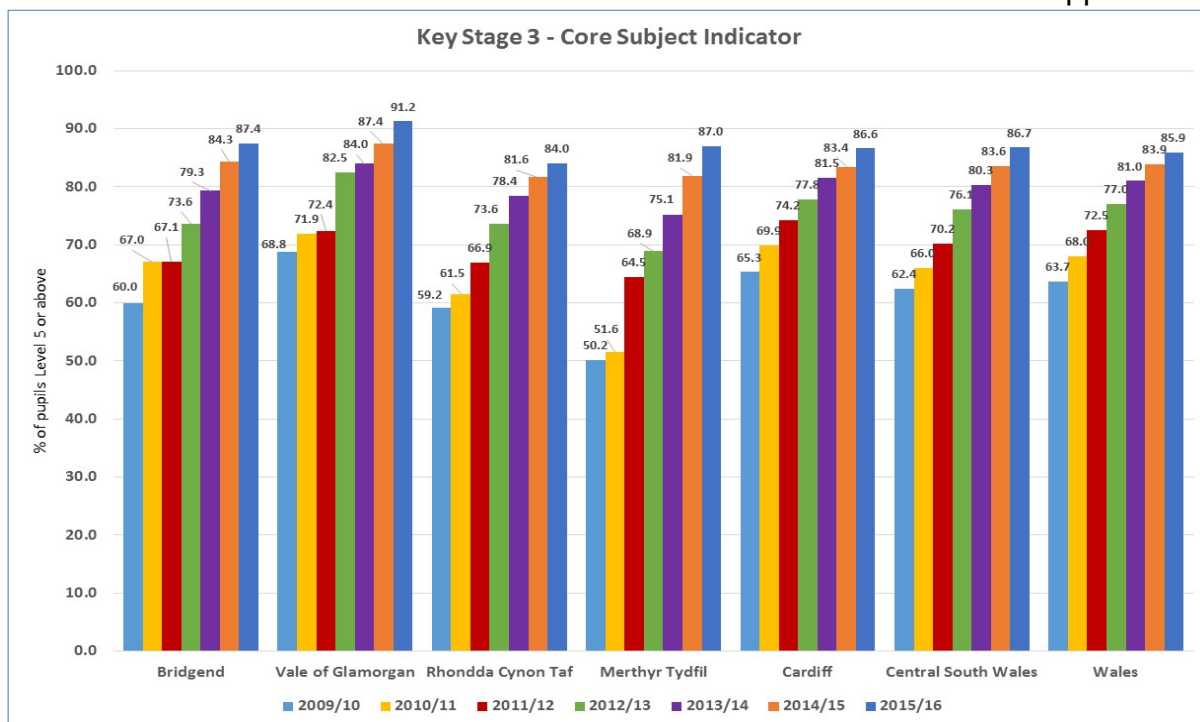
30 There are a number of areas where the Central South Consortium needs to make faster progress. These include the following:

- The need to have a continued focus on the achievement of pupils eligible for free school meals across the region.
- The need for a smooth handover and alignment with Schools Challenge Cymru. We have a SCC lead in the region and 6 SCC advisers. We have Accelerated Learning Boards and Improvement plans from all SCC schools, but we need to continue to focus on making sure SCC, the Consortium and the authority are working together efficiently as we plan for transition as the project ends.
- Analysis of key stage 2 and 3 tests has indicated variation in 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.
- Continuing to work with all human resource departments and governor support teams to embed consistency and quality advice for schools regardless of where they are in the region.
- Improving 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.

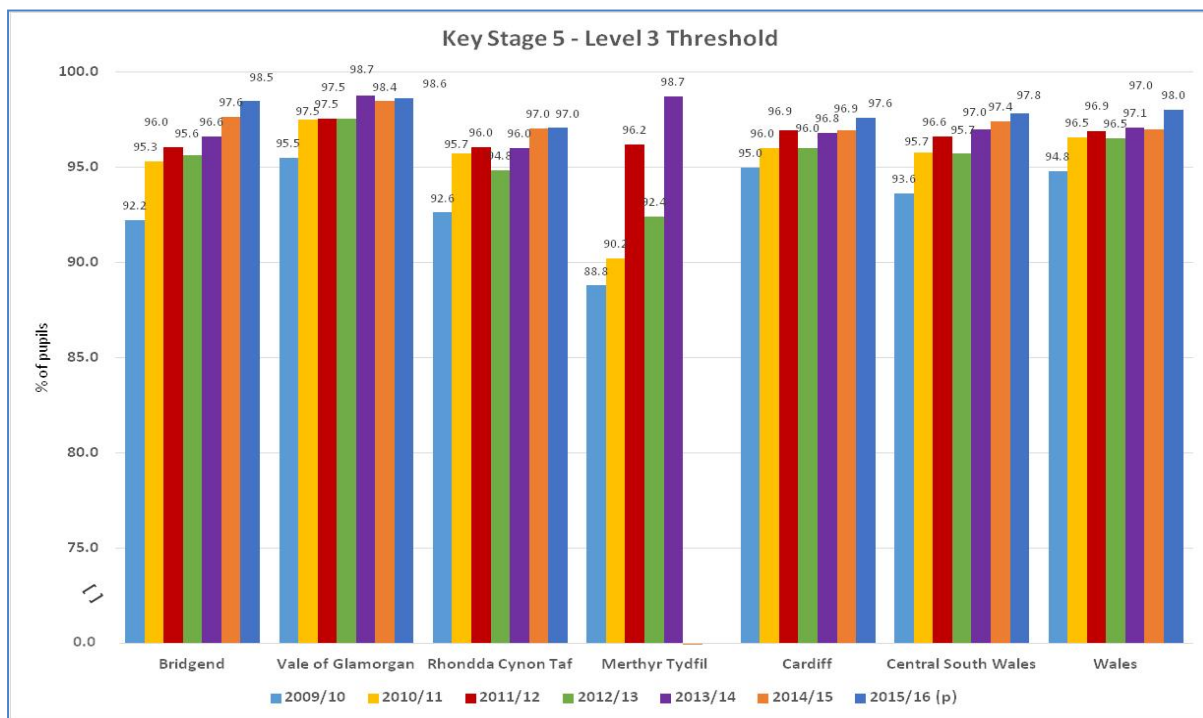
Annex: Headline results across the Central South region 2015/16

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 Key Stages 1-4 for the first time.

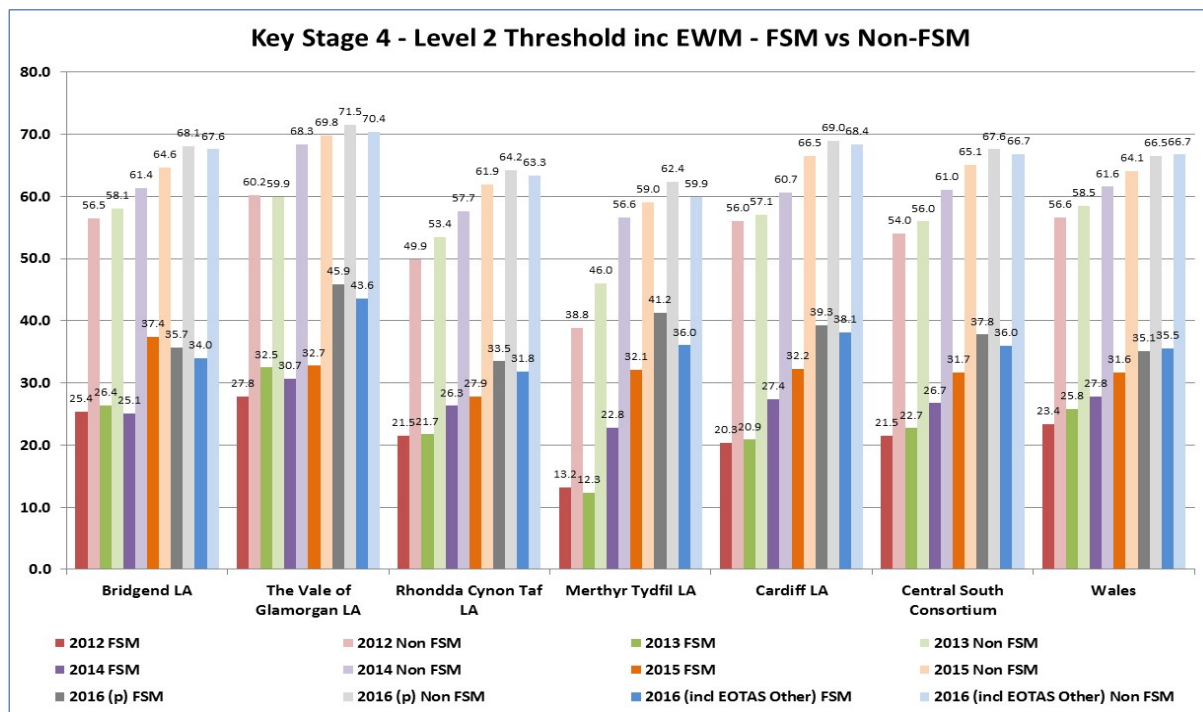




There is further work to do at post 16 (in school sixth forms) across the region. NB: MTBC has post 16 provision provided by the FE sector which is not included here.

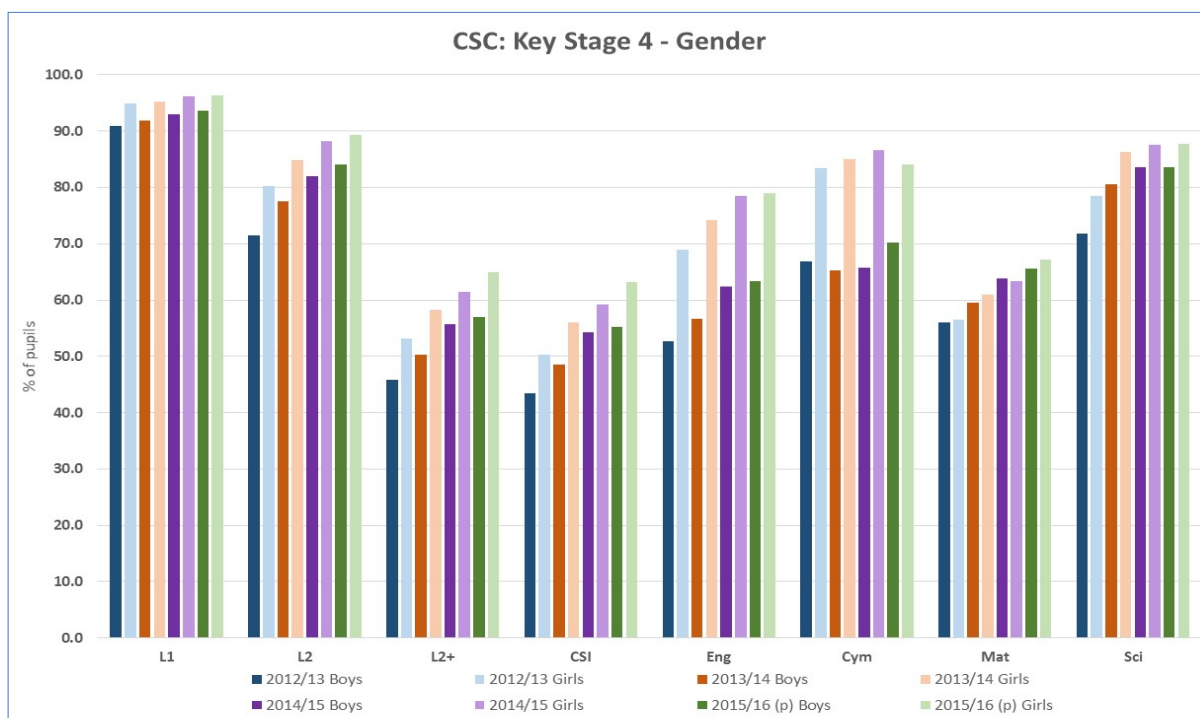


The performance of children claiming free school meals (e-FSM) has improved in each local authority, however, the gap remains stark compared with children not claiming free school meals (non e-FSM).

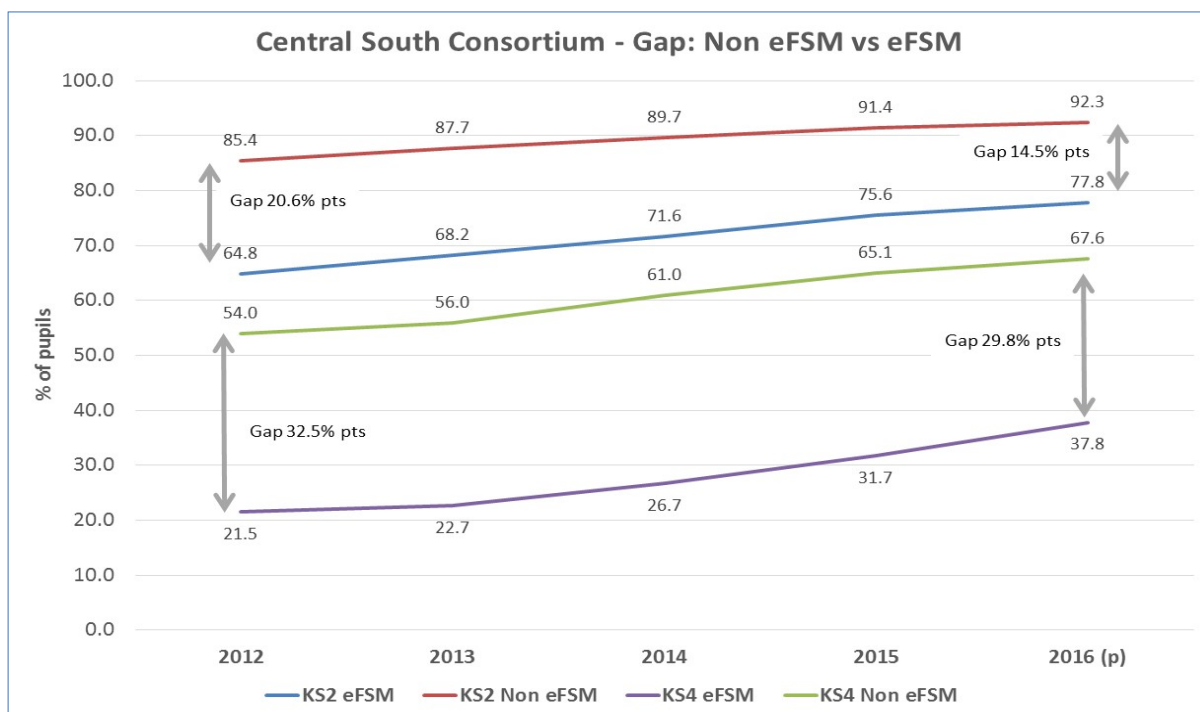


Appendix A

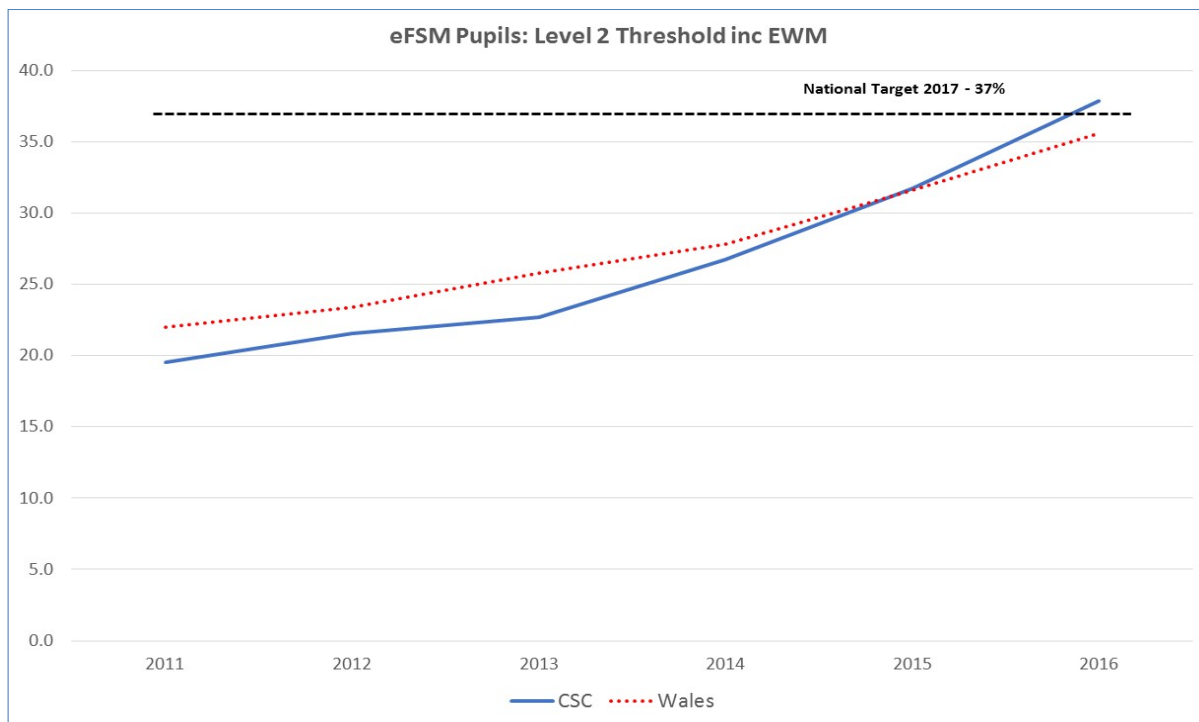
There are particular issues across the region relating to boys' performance in literacy/English/Welsh, and girls' performance in mathematics/numeracy which are first identified within the Foundation Phase and continue to the end of key stage 4.



The gap between the performance of pupils who are 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 sit above the national average and exceed the Welsh Government's target a year early.



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

