

CENTRAL SOUTH CONSORTIUM – ANNUAL PERFORMANCE 2014

Reason for the Report

1. To enable Members to receive a report on the Central South Consortium' performance and budgetary position, and help contribute to the development of next years business plan. The report will also enable the Committee to judge the Consortium's progress in addressing those actions identified to address the recommendation within the Estyn Monitor visit letter.

Background

2. The Welsh Government 's National model for regional working, published in February 2014 includes a section on Scrutiny and liaison between local authorities and regional consortia, which states:

“Regional consortia will nominate a senior officer to liaise with the each authority's lead officer. It shall be for the respective officers to agree on the scope and frequency of their meetings, with contact being more intensive the greater the number of schools in the authority that come into one of the categories of concern. A note of meetings, recording issues discussed and decisions agreed, will be made.

Each Local Authority and their respective regional consortium will make arrangements for robust democratic scrutiny of the consortium business plan and activities as it relates to individual local authority area. Each authority's scrutiny committee for education services will also need sufficient information to consider the performance of their schools.

Local authorities undertake to be reasonable in their expectation of consortia staff and resources and ensure that senior leaders are not required to spend a disproportionate amount of their time on reporting and scrutiny work”.

3. The Central South Consortium's business plan refers to the scrutiny arrangements and states that the Managing Director of the Consortium will be expected to provide a report to each scrutiny committee of each local authority on the performance and budgetary position of the consortium and the future business plan proposals. This would ideally take place in the autumn term to inform Business planning.
4. Cabinet at its meeting on 9 October 2014 approved a report on the National Model for Regional School Improvement Working in Wales – Central South Education Consortium, which included within the agreement that “The Parties have agreed the Managing Director shall provide a report to each local authority scrutiny committee with responsibility for education on the performance and budgetary position of the CSC and the future business plan proposals. This would likely take place during the autumn term so as to inform business planning”.
5. The Committee considered the Consortium' business plan at its meeting on 10 June 2014 as part of its consideration of the Education Business plan. The Committee considered in detail the new role of the School Challenge Advisors, and looked forward to seeing the impact that these advisors are making in fostering steady progress of the School Improvement Groups and ensuring school wisely use any Pupil Deprivation Grant.
6. The Committee also agreed that as part of its work programme, this Committee would undertake the scrutiny of the Consortium to ensure that it provides the support and guidance and challenge needed to enable Cardiff's Schools to improve and improve the outcomes of Cardiff 's Pupils.

Issues

7. The Managing Director of the Central South Consortium, Hannah Woodhouse, supported by Stuart Sherman and Debbie Lewis, Consortium Challenge Advisors, will be in attendance and has provided a briefing on the Central South Consortiums contribution to raising standards in Cardiff Schools, copy attached at **Appendix A**.

The briefing cover the following elements:

- a. Changes to Central South Consortium
 - b. Performance in the region in 2014;
 - c. Consortium's business and priorities
 - d. The Central South Wales Challenge
 - e. The role of Challenge Advisors and the Challenge Framework in Cardiff;
 - f. How is the consortium supporting Cardiff Schools
 - g. Budgetary Position
 - h. Accountability and Quality Assurance
 - i. Issues to be developed further,
8. In addition, Estyn in its letter following the latest Monitoring visit, provided a number of comments on the arrangements for delivering school improvement services, challenge and support to all schools. In particular Estyn highlighted the following issues which needed to be addressed by the Consortium, these include:
- a. Improved arrangements to identify and intervene in underperforming schools and that this work is now having an impact;
 - b. Challenge Advisers are of a high quality and have clear guidance to support them in challenging schools, with robust and up to date information;
 - c. quality assuring process for Challenge Advisers have been strengthened, and are now secure to bring a rigorous challenge to schools;
 - d. that school underperformance is recognised quickly with the consistent use of the assessment criteria and actions are put in place as soon as possible;
 - e. that Challenge Advisers have access to the consortiums support and challenge framework to classify schools according to risk and to plan appropriate interventions;
 - f. That there is clear link between the category of the school and the performance of its pupils;
 - g. That all annual school performance reports contain clear messages for schools to know how to improve and explain clearly any shortcomings;

- h. Help school governors become more effective in identifying area for improvement and monitoring the improvements actions.

Scope of Scrutiny

9. This report will provide the Committee with an opportunity to gain an understanding and test that the operation of the Consortium in its support to Cardiff schools together with the Council to, improve learner's outcomes, deliver high quality teaching and learning and support and empower school leaders.

10. It will also enable Members to enquire that:

- i. the Consortium is performing well in its activities and within budget
- ii. the changes being implemented by the Consortium are helping either improve or make services for pupils in Cardiff more effective?
- iii. The actions being implemented by the Consortium will fully address the concerns raised by Estyn.

Way Forward

11. At the meeting. Hannah Woodhouse, Managing Director of the Central South Consortium and Stuart Sherman and Debbie Lewis, Challenge Advisors, will be in attendance to present the briefings on the Consortium's performance budget and comment on issues raised by Estyn in its monitoring visit letter.

12. At the meeting Councillor Julia Magill (Cabinet Member for Education and Skills) and Nick Batchelar (Director of Education and Lifelong Learning) will be in attendance to answer any questions Members may wish to ask.

13. Members may wish to note the information contained in the report and determine whether there are any issues or comments which they would like to pass on to the

Managing Director of the Consortium, Cabinet Member or Director of Education and Lifelong Learning.

Legal Implications

14. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct legal implications. However, legal implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any legal implications arising from those recommendations. All decisions taken by or on behalf of the Council must (a) be within the legal powers of the Council; (b) comply with any procedural requirement imposed by law; (c) be within the powers of the body or person exercising powers on behalf of the Council; (d) be undertaken in accordance with the procedural requirements imposed by the Council e.g. Scrutiny Procedure Rules; (e) be fully and properly informed; (f) be properly motivated; (g) be taken having regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its taxpayers; and (h) be reasonable and proper in all the circumstances.

Financial Implications

15. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct financial implications at this stage in relation to any of the work programme. However, financial implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any financial implications arising from those recommendations.

Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- I. consider the information provided in the report, appendix and presentation;
- II. consider whether they have any observations, comments or recommendations they wish to make; and
- III. consider a way forward with regard to any future scrutiny of the issues raised.

MARIE ROSENTHAL

County Clerk and Monitoring Officer

3rd November 2014

Central South Consortium and its contribution to raising standards in Cardiff Schools

Paper for Cardiff Scrutiny Committee

November 2014

Introduction

1. A report has been requested by the Cardiff Scrutiny committee from Central South Consortium following a presentation to the committee in June 2014. The report was required to address the performance and budgetary position of the Consortium as well as how well the Consortium is addressing the recommendations from Estyn raised in February 2014.

Changes to Central South Consortium

2. Central South Consortium covers 406 schools and approximately 30% of Wales' children from across the five authorities of Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf and the Vale of Glamorgan. Since its beginning in 2012 the Consortium has undergone a period of rapid change. In January 2014 schools across the region led the establishment of the 'Central South Wales Challenge', a self improving school system across the region where increasingly schools are encouraged and enabled to lead improvement across the system working together with other schools and drawing capacity from each other.
3. In 2014 Welsh Government produced the 'National Model for Consortium working' and required each consortium to produce a business case demonstrating how it meets the national model. As a result there was further significant restructure of the consortium. Significant among this was the ending of the LINKS traded service, the appointment of a new literacy and numeracy team as well as new lead roles for leadership and teaching and learning. The appointment of all challenge advisers was reviewed, the total number of posts reduced, a number of challenge advisers left the service and a further group of seconded headteachers were appointed to the service on a part or full time basis. A third of challenge advisers are now successful

recently retired or practicing headteachers. The senior tier of Senior Challenge advisers changed significantly to recognise the increasingly effective partnership working between local authorities and the consortium.

4. Significant changes have been made to the governance of the consortium from September 2014. The Joint Committee which is responsible for the consortium's performance has been slimmed down and strengthened, lead roles reviewed, an Executive Board established with representation from headteachers and external experts and a governor steering group set up to complement the headteachers steering group. Cardiff Council are now well represented in the governance structure: Paul Orders is the lead Chief Executive for the region this year, Julia McGill Cabinet Member for Education and Learning chairs the Consortium's Executive Board.

5. The consortium is not currently responsible for providing support to governors, 14-19 curriculum advice to secondary schools and colleges or for HR specialist advice to schools. However, working closely with the directors of education, the consortium has established a regional governors' steering group comprised of five expert governors within the governance structure. This group is working with the consortium to develop a programme that will provide support in those areas of governance where further development is required. This will include support for governors' role in self-evaluation and improvement planning and in fulfilling their role as a school's critical friend, all of which are key in a self-improving school system. Over the longer term the consortium will be working with the five authorities to support the provision of consistent and high quality HR services, governor support and 14-19 services for schools in each authority. These arrangements will feature in the consortium business plan 2015/16.

Performance in the region in 2014

6. Since 2012 standards have improved across the region at every key stage. In 2014 outcomes demonstrate significant improvement across the Central South region, outstripping that of other regions and national improvements at the foundation phase, key stages 2, 3 and 4.

7. Headline performance indicators demonstrate:
- a. At the Foundation phase schools achieved a 3.2% point improvement, against a national improvement of 2.2% at the expected level. In Cardiff Foundation Phase results rose by 2.8% against the Foundation Phase Indicator.
 - b. At Key Stage Two outcomes at level 4+ improved across the region from 82.3% to 85.8% (nationally 86.1%) – a rise of 2% points against 1.8% points nationally. KS2 results rose in Cardiff by 2.5% at level 4+ against the core subject indicator (CSI).
 - c. At Key Stage Three results rose from 76.1% at level 5+ to 80.3% (81% nationally) a rise of 4.2% points against 4% points nationally. On average results rose by 3.7% in Cardiff against the CSI.
 - d. At Key Stage Four (provisional), all five authorities improved at L2+ by more than the national level of improvement leading to a regional average improvement of 4.6% points vs the national of 2.2% points. Cardiff schools improved by 3.8% (provisional).
 - e. In mathematics in particular L2 improvement at KS4 in the region was 4.4% points (56.3% to 60.4%) on average against a national average improvement of 1.4% points (60.3 to 61.4%). Cardiff schools L2 mathematics outcomes improved by 3.1%.
 - f. Attendance also improved in both phases taking the region to the national average at secondary level for the second year (93.6%). In the primary sector attendance was at the Welsh average in 2012-2013 and improved by a further 0.8% overall in 2013-2014. Attendance has improved in Cardiff by 3.4% since 2011 in secondary schools and by 2% (provisional) in primary schools.
8. Most significantly the performance of pupils claiming free school meals (FSM) has improved faster than the national average at the Foundation Phase and key stages 2 and 3. The rate of improvement has been between 3%-4% greater than for non e-FSM pupils. As a result the gap in performance has begun to narrow. In Key Stage 4 in contrast the gap between the performance

of e-FSM pupils and non e-FM pupils widened by around 1% across the region as whole. However, in Cardiff the gap was reduced by 2.6%.

9. These improvements notwithstanding there is much to do to improve outcomes at each key stage. In some cases the improvements in performance have started from a low base and, even though the gaps with the Welsh averages have reduced considerably, there is a need to improve performance further so that the region's pupils can compete successfully with their peers across Wales, the UK and beyond.

10. Cardiff Scrutiny Committee received a verbal report on the educational performance of Cardiff schools on the 8th September and will receive a full performance report from officers in January following the availability of final published data. The headline data for Cardiff show improvement at each key stage. However, even though there was more substantial improvement at key stage 4 than previously, the rate of improvement has not yet matched that of some other authorities in the region. In particular, there are still variations in performance between similar schools at key stage 4 that inhibit improvement overall at a fast enough rate.

Central South Consortium: Business case and priorities

11. The 2014/15 Consortium Business Case establishes seven priority areas for the Consortium to demonstrate impact. These are:
 - I. To close the gap in outcomes between children receiving free school meals and those not whilst improving both groups;
 - II. To improve literacy in English/Welsh;
 - III. To improve numeracy;
 - IV. To improve outcomes at the Level 2+ threshold (five GCSEs A-C including English/Welsh and mathematics);
 - V. To improve teaching;
 - VI. To improve leadership;
 - VII. To improve attendance.

12. The Consortium 13/14 Business Case sets stretching and ambitious targets against each priority based on those set in each authority and reflecting the outcomes of schools' target setting. Each LA has agreed a local authority annex which indicates targets for that local authority which reflect those set in the post-inspection action plan or corporate education plan. The local authority reviews performance against the annex following a performance report received by the end of the autumn and spring terms.

The Central South Wales Challenge

13. The Business Case also establishes the strategic ambition to develop and support a self improving school system which is enquiry led and built around effective self evaluation and improvement planning. This is called the **Central South Wales Challenge**. The Central South Wales Challenge is about improving outcomes against the priorities through leadership of a self-improving school system. It is based on the evidence about what works in systems internationally and uses six indicators. The table below sets out the current position against each and how we will measure impact.

Indicator	Impact measured by
A focus on capacity and leadership of teaching and learning through the development of school improvement hubs resourced in September to provide leadership and teaching and learning support across the region;	Clear criteria for hub schools. Numbers of teachers completing OTP/ITP, teaching and learning/leadership indicator in Estyn reports and externally accredited.
School Improvement Groups (SIGs) set up in April which include all schools in the region within 43 groups. They each deliberately include a range of schools with differing levels of capacity, need and from different parts of the region.	SIG plans received with impact measures, challenge framework monitoring impact on schools, CAs badged against schools, external evaluation commissioned from Nov 14.

<p>30 Pathfinder partnerships established in February across the region on a school to school basis. Funding provided against plan. Phase two in development.</p>	<p>Initial evaluation in September 14 reported significant impact on school capacity to improve.</p>
<p>Family/community: Closing the gap case study schools identified and built on/invested in to share expertise. Pledge developed to identify and share cultural capital access to all children in the region.</p>	<p>Case study schools identified from data and reviewed by Ipsos Mori by Jan 2015.</p>
<p>Leadership: Peer reviews piloted across the region with a view to developing offer for all green/yellow schools from 2015/16.</p>	<p>External training provided to peer reviewers who must meet criteria and Estyn involved in training.</p>
<p>LA/Consortium role: Improved Challenge framework for CA role focused on building capacity for self evaluation in schools, improved engagement with governors and increasingly using school led support models (as above). Sharper more consistent LA function including consistent intervention model.</p>	<p>Improved QA of challenge adviser function and challenge framework expectations. Focus on Estyn monitoring of challenge and support.</p>

14. Good progress has been made in moving to a school-led strategy but it is recognised that further work will need to be done to evidence the impact of the Challenge on standards, teaching and leadership. Headteachers in Cardiff are very well involved in influencing the direction of this work through the headteachers' strategy group. Most, but not all schools, are now active participants in the collaborative work of their school improvement groups. This work is reported regularly through the governance structure of the consortium and will develop further in the 2015/16 consortium business case.

The role of Challenge Advisers and the Challenge Framework in Cardiff

15. Effective school self-evaluation and improvement planning are at the centre of the vision of a self-improving school system. The Consortium acknowledges the basis of the February 2014 Estyn findings in the Cardiff inspection which recognised the sound basis provided by the challenge framework but highlighted the need to improve the challenge and support provided to Cardiff's schools. It has been clear that despite good work in some areas professional practice and performance management have needed improvement to bring greater consistency to the quality of the challenge and support.
16. As a result there have been a number of significant changes. These include: close working with the newly appointed head of achievement and inclusion in Cardiff; changes to the arrangements at senior challenge adviser level for the authority; the appointment of a senior challenge adviser to oversee the work of challenge advisers in secondary schools; the coordination of the work of the secondary schools in the Schools Challenge Cymru through a senior officer; implementation of performance management that makes a link between the work of challenge advisers and the progress made by the schools to which they are attached; quality assurance of challenge advisers' work through accompanied visits to schools and scrutiny of written reports.
17. There is now earlier engagement with schools where the need to improve is greatest and a clearer identification of strengths and areas for improvement. Arrangements for assessing and reporting the progress of these schools are also now more systematic. Cardiff Council's self evaluation of progress against Estyn recommendations indicates the progress of this work so far: *'Improved support and challenge can be seen in the improvement in outcomes overall: at level 2+ the 4% improvement is the highest year on year gain in Cardiff since this measure was introduced. However the variability between schools in similar contexts suggests that more work needs to be done to ensure consistency in challenge and support.'* Cardiff Council Commentary on progress in addressing Estyn's recommendation. Nick

Batchelar. Director of Education and Lifelong Learning. Sept 14.

18. It will be important to continue efforts to bring greater consistency and rigour to the processes for supporting and monitoring the work in these schools so that progress occurs as needed. The consortium has already brought to the attention of the local authority schools where there are concerns about performance. The local authority is responding by taking action concerning the use of its statutory intervention powers.
19. The consortium has also worked hard to improve the Framework For Challenge And Support and the consistency with which it is applied by challenge advisers. This makes clearer the expectations of the challenge advisers concerning the key aspects of their work, and starts to shift the responsibility for school self- evaluation and improvement to the headteacher and governors, supported or challenged by the challenge adviser. Each challenge adviser works with the school to agree a report that summarises the view of strengths and areas for improvement in standards and the school's ability to improve. The report also confirms the level of support required by the school. The challenge adviser supports the school to identify improvement priorities and access support, increasingly from other schools but also from providers based within the consortium or commissioned elsewhere. The framework has brought forward the timescale of engagement with vulnerable schools so that challenge advisers can proceed more swiftly from the start of the autumn term to identify priorities and provide support.
20. It will be important also that there is greater focus on working collaboratively with those services that remain within the local authority and which also have a significant bearing on school improvement. These include inclusion services, support for vulnerable learners such as looked after children as well as officers working in HR, finance and school organisational planning. The collaboration between the senior challenge advisers and head of achievement and inclusion will be particularly important in overseeing procedures that lead to effective working between challenge advisers and relevant officers based in the local authority. It will be important that there is a tight grip on monitoring

progress and improvement planning with Cardiff schools, as highlighted above, with a focus on schools making insufficient progress. This will be a priority for the organisation during the year and the consortium's senior staff will need to work closely with the authority's senior staff in this respect.

21. The work of the challenge advisers is underpinned by the new national categorisation model which is now in place for all primary schools and is underway for secondary schools. The Welsh Government places each school in a standards group (1-4) as step 1 of the process and the challenge adviser then agrees with each school a judgement about its ability to improve (categories A-D) at step 2. These two judgements are then brought together to agree the most appropriate level of support for the school from green, through yellow, amber and then red (most intensive support). This approach which involves the challenge adviser in validating or challenging the school's view of itself has been welcomed by schools across the region. The impact of these changes has been evident in Cardiff in the earlier identification of schools causing concern and closer collaboration with the local authority to take swifter action and support as highlighted above. It will be important that this underpins a better consistency of practice across the region and that there is evidence that improvement is taking place more robustly through the regularly progress reviews.

How is the consortium supporting Cardiff schools?

22. Cardiff Local Authority contribute £1,534,519 of the total £4,416,486 core funding for the Consortium function. The consortium provides twelve full or part time Challenge advisers working with Cardiff schools plus support for Schools Challenge Cymru advisers and two senior challenge adviser posts – primary and secondary. In addition to the consortium leadership team, data team and business support and core costs, all schools in the region have access to core funded support from strategic advisers for literacy and numeracy (primary and secondary), leadership, teaching, ICT, foundation phase, Welsh and Welsh second language. The CSW strategy group is funded from core funding as is the pathfinder programme - 13 Cardiff primary

schools and 5 secondaries have been part of the first tranche of the CSW pathfinder programme.

23. Retained School Effectiveness Grant partly funds literacy and numeracy support to schools most in need. This includes 22 Cardiff primary schools in receipt of intensive literacy and numeracy support. 15 secondary schools are receiving secondary maths and English interventions. SEG also funds School Improvement Groups and our data indicates that all Cardiff schools bar a small minority are engaged in SIGs.
24. Latest data indicates that 34 middle or senior leaders in Cardiff accessed leadership provision from the consortium last year and so far 27 have committed to leadership programmes this year. 95 teachers from 40 Cardiff schools have been part of the Olevi accredited Outstanding Teacher Programme and Improving Teacher Programme (OTP/ITP) which was offered across the Consortium from January 2014. Cardiff High School is leading on the development of the improvement hubs and providing OTP/ITP from September.
25. There are three additional advisers covering the 6 Schools Challenge Cymru schools in Cardiff and in addition the Foundation Phase, Welsh in Education, Physical Education in School, Hwb+ and Qualified for Life teams are working with Cardiff schools as part of their grant funded operation.

Budgetary position

26. An updated budget report was recently presented to the Joint Committee of the consortium and is publicly available. It demonstrated that the consortium is currently showing a slight overspend of less than £40k due to development work to design new functions for which the consortium was not funded initially, but it is on track to deliver a balanced budget by year end. In addition the annual audit of accounts was presented to show that the financial management of budget has been conducted appropriately.

27. Longer term, the five authorities are working together to agree the principles of core consortium budgets and grant arrangements for 15/16 within the commitment to minimise turbulence and maximise the effective delegation of budgets to schools.

Accountability and quality assurance

28. The new leadership and governance structure of the consortium is improving but changes are still very recent and will require more time to demonstrate sustained impact. As indicated above Cardiff Council are very significantly represented in the new governance and accountability structure— which has been in place only from September. There is a clearer reporting process and improvement cycle. The Director of Education and Cabinet Member hold the Consortium to account through a termly progress report at or shortly after the end of term.

29. At an operational level, the interface between Cardiff Council and the Consortium has been further strengthened by the recent appointment of the new Head of Service and Assistant Director in Cardiff who work closely with senior staff in the consortium. The Head of Service will meet regularly with senior challenge advisers to review progress. As the new structure beds in the structures in place need to demonstrate their ability to challenge and hold the Consortium to account on outcomes and impact.

30. In recognition of the need to improve oversight and quality assurance the Consortium has taken steps to improve processes as follows:

- a. A performance management framework with clearer expectations about objective setting and performance monitoring. Senior Challenge advisers are clearer about their line management expectations and are undertaking joint visits with CAs as highlighted earlier.
- b. A professional development framework to support capacity building within the service is being developed in addition to national training. The framework includes collaborative action research, reflection about practice and

coaching. In combination these are intended to ensure that all challenge advisers are well placed to meet the national standards.

- c. An explicit quality assurance model including regular review of inspection outcomes against categorisation and pre inspection reports, progress against the framework, progress of vulnerable schools as well as budget monitoring. In addition a school improvement group (SIG) report will be provided each term on the progress and impact of SIGs and pathfinders.
- d. A report will be provided to each LA each term on the implementation of the framework, inspection outcomes against categorisation and progress of vulnerable schools. The Director of each authority will review progress with the Managing Director of the consortium and senior staff.
- e. The consortium has commissioned two independent evaluations of progress of the implementation of our Central South Wales challenge framework and a further externally led survey of the use of PDG in Central South Schools.

Issues to be developed further

31. There are a number of issues which the consortium needs to make fast progress on:

- **sharp pace and urgency to focus on the achievement of children eligible for free school meals** in particular across the region;
- **alignment with Schools Challenge Cymru** to ensure a clear focus and impact on the schools that are part of the Challenge and across the system using the significant resources, high visibility and high quality advisers working in the programme;
- **analysis of key stage 2 and 3 tests indicates some variation of teacher assessment** and moderation. All consortia are reviewing how they support cluster schools to effectively moderate assessment;

- **deepening joint practice development work across all SIGs and pathfinders** through the development of evaluative practice training and joint practice development tools;
- **building further capacity in teaching and learning and leadership** through hubs and peer review work. This work is particularly strong in Cardiff where a number of hub and specialist schools are developing. This programme has significant potential to build sustainable high quality capacity for all schools in the region built on evidence based practice about effective teaching and leadership;
- **work with all HR and governor support teams** to embed consistency and quality advice for schools regardless of where they are in the region;
- **improving the supply and recruitment of high quality teachers** into the region through work with Teach First and exploring other direct recruitment models; and
- **improved use of information IT systems** across the region through the development of the Portal as a single point of information for schools, authorities and consortium colleagues across the region.