



Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol
MERTHYR TUDFUL

MERTHYR TYDFIL
County Borough Council

LEARNING

SELF EVALUATION REPORT

JUNE 2019

Local Government Education Services (LGES)
Inspection Framework

INSPECTION AREA 1 - STANDARDS

1.1 Standards and progress overall

The current position for standards and overall progress is **unsatisfactory**.

Estyn Inspections

Estyn Inspection outcomes for the past three years show that 85% of schools inspected were judged good or better for standards. One early year's setting has been inspected in the last three years. However, no judgement was made on standards due to small cohort sizes.

Early Years provision

- Flying Start provision covers 41.9% of the early year's population. There is no current national benchmark for outcomes, however the service has supported childcare settings over the past two years to implement the Foundation Phase and has worked with Welsh Government (WG) to amend local guidance which is now being utilised across Wales.
- In 2017-18, 52% of children achieved Outcome Level 1 in all four areas of development at final assessment using the Foundation Phase Compact. Across the areas of learning, the percentage of children at expected level between the initial and final assessment increased by between 30 to 39 percentage points.

Foundation Phase

- Standards at the end of the Foundation Phase are **good**.
- Outcomes are 2.9 percentage points above the Welsh average in the Foundation Phase Outcome Indicator (FPOI).
- Outcomes in all areas of learning are above the Welsh averages at the expected outcome (Outcome 5+).
- Attainment at the expected Outcome +1 (Outcome 6) is below the Welsh average in all areas of learning, by between 4.2 and 8.9 percentage points.
- Due to the introduction of the revised Foundation Phase Areas of Learning, comparison with previous years is not possible.
- Progress from Reception entry baseline shows that most pupils make at least expected progress in all core areas of learning, with between 60 to 96% of pupils making more than expected progress.

Key Stage 2

- Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are **adequate and need improvement**.
- Since 2013/14, the Core Subject Indicator (CSI) has increased by 4.1 percentage points, moving above the Welsh average for the first time in 2016/17. However, compared to the previous year, outcomes were 1.9 percentage points lower in 2017/18 and 1.2 percentage points below the Welsh average.
- Outcomes in all subjects at the expected level (Level 4+) have increased since 2013/14, however when compared with the previous year performance in 2017/18 decreased by between 0.4 and 1.8 percentage points.
- Outcomes in all subjects, with the exception of Welsh first language, are below the Welsh averages at the expected level (Level 4+).
- Outcomes at the expected level+1 (Level 5) have increased in all subject areas over the last 5 years, however with the exception of Welsh first language all subjects are below the Welsh average. The distance from Welsh averages has narrowed since 2013/14.
- Progress from end of Foundation Phase assessments shows that most pupils make at least expected progress, with 27% of pupils making more than expected progress.

Key Stage 3

- Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are **adequate and need improvement**.
- Since 2013/14, the CSI has increased by 13 percentage points, at a faster rate than nationally and performance is now in line with the Welsh average.
- Outcomes in all core subjects have at the expected level (Level 4+) have increased since 2013/14, by between 9.6 and 10.0 percentage points. There was a slight decrease in English in 2017/18 compared to the previous year and this is below the Welsh average. Outcomes in mathematics and science moved above Welsh averages for the first time in 2017/18.
- Outcomes at the expected level+1 (Level 6) have increased in all subject areas over the last five years, however there was a decrease in English in 2017/18 compared to the previous year. All subjects are below the Welsh average at the expected level +1.
- Progress from the end of Key Stage 2 assessments shows that most pupils make at least expected progress, with between 47 to 57% of pupils making more than expected progress.

Key Stage 4

- Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are **unsatisfactory**. This is because attainment has decreased in 2018 and is well below Welsh averages for nearly all indicators.
- Performance at the Level 1 threshold has declined (4.1 percentage points) and moved below the Welsh average in 2017/18.
- Performance at the Level 2 threshold declined slightly (0.7 percentage points) and is below the Welsh average by 8.9 percentage points.
- Performance at the Level 2+ threshold increased slightly (0.3 percentage points), however, performance is below the Welsh average by 12.4 percentage points.
- Performance at the Capped 9 average points score declined and is below the Welsh average.
- The percentage of pupils achieving five A*- A grades remains the same at 9.3% however, this is below the Welsh average by 8.7 percentage points and the gap has widened from previous years.
- Performance at Level 2 English fell in 2018 to 48.9%. This is below the Welsh average by 13.7 percentage points.
- Performance at Level 2 mathematics increased to 55.5%. This is below the Welsh average but the gap narrowed in 2018/19 to 8.1 percentage points.
- When comparing with similar schools, for both the Level 2+ threshold and the Capped 9 points score, two schools are below the median, one school is in the top quarter and one school is in the top 50%.
- Value added data shows that two schools have positive value added for the Level 2+ threshold and two schools have negative value added. For the Capped 9 points score three out of four schools have positive value added.
- The following table shows Key Stage 4 2018 outcomes linked to Key Stage 2 levels:

2017/18 Results	Key Stage 2 level – Year 6 2012/13				
	<4	4	5	6	4+
A*-C English GCSE	11.8%	39.5%	89.4%	100%	57.2%
A*-C Maths GCSE	7.1%	48.8%	95.0%	100%	65.3%
A*-C Science GCSE	12.0%	47.3%	88.9%	-	60.9%

- Compared to similar authorities performance at the Level 2+ threshold is lower than all comparable authorities by between 1.8 and 12.4 percentage points.

NEETs

- Standards for NEETs are **good**. For 2017, the published WG NEET figure for Merthyr Tydfil was 1.3%, equating to seven young people. This placed the local authority in joint 5th position and continues the sustained performance of the service area in reducing NEETs.

- Performance has been consistently better than the Welsh average over the last five years.
- For the 5th year in a row there were no young people with an unknown destination.
- At year ending March 2018 (Stats Wales), the annual population survey identified that the unemployment rate for 16-24 year olds in Merthyr Tydfil was 13.5% (600), equalling the Welsh average. This figure has decreased by 23.4% since 2012 meaning Merthyr Tydfil's improvement has been at an accelerated pace in comparison to the rest of Wales which had decreased by 10.4%.

Youth Service

- Standards for the Youth Service are **good**.
- 26% (569) of young people achieve recognised qualifications within the Youth Service. Performance has been significantly above the Welsh average for the last three years.
- Outcomes for targeted services are good with often 100% of young people achieving qualifications on offer if they have completed the programmes of learning.

1.2 Standards and progress of specific groups

The current position for the standards and progress of specific groups is **unsatisfactory**.

Gender

- Within Flying Start, the gap between boys and girls has slightly narrowed between initial and final assessments across all areas of development. The gap between boys and girls narrowed by 5% in personal and social development; 1% in language, literacy and communication and 5% in mathematical development from initial to final assessment.
- At the end of the Foundation Phase, the gap between the performance of boys and girls is smaller than at a national level; performance of both boys and girls is above the Welsh averages.
- At the end of Key Stage two, the gap between the performance of boys and girls has narrowed, however this is due to a decline in the performance of girls. The gap is smaller than at a national level. The attainment of boys is above the Welsh average.
- At the end of Key Stage 3, the gap between the performance of boys and girls has narrowed, but is still wider than at the national level. The attainment of boys is below the Welsh average, whereas the attainment of girls remains above the Welsh average.
- At the end of Key Stage 4, the gap between the performance of boys and girls has increased, and is still wider than at the national level.

Eligible for Free School Meals

- Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) are outperformed by those not eligible at each key stage.
- 80.4% of pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) achieved the FPOI in 2018 compared with 87.1% of pupils not eligible for FSM. The performance of both groups of pupils is above Welsh averages and the gap is narrower than at a national level.
- 75.8% of pupils eligible for FSM achieved the Key Stage 2 Core Subject Indicator in 2018 compared with 91.0% of pupils not eligible for FSM. The performance of both groups of pupils is below Welsh averages and the gap is wider than at a national level.
- 78.9% of pupils eligible for FSM achieved the CSI in 2018 compared with 90.4% of pupils not eligible for FSM. The performance of pupils eligible for FSM improved in 2018 resulting in the gap narrowing and it is smaller than at a national level.
- 23.8% of pupils eligible for FSM achieved the Level 2+ Threshold at Key Stage 4 in 2018 compared with 50.7% of pupils not eligible for FSM. The gap is smaller than at a national level, however this is mainly due to pupils not eligible for FSM not performing as well as those nationally.

Learners with English as an Additional Language

- English as an Additional Language (EAL) children attending Flying Start settings did not progress in line with their non-EAL peers.
- At Foundation Phase, EAL pupils, categories A, B and E, do not perform as well as pupils who have English or Welsh as a first language. All other EAL pupils perform better than non-EAL pupils.
- At Key Stage 2, EAL pupils, categories A, B and C, do not perform as well as pupils who have English or Welsh as a first language. All other EAL pupils perform better than non-EAL pupils.
- At Key Stage 3, EAL pupils, categories C and E do not perform as well as pupils who have English or Welsh as a first language. All other EAL pupils perform better than non-EAL pupils.
- Pupils with EAL (Categories A-E) performed better than non-EAL pupils in the L2+ Threshold at KS4. 53.3% compared to 46.5%.

Minority ethnic groups

- At Foundation Phase, pupils from ethnic groups other than white British make up 7.2% of the cohort, 3.3% of which are Polish. On the whole pupils from an ethnic minority do not perform as well as pupils from a white British ethnic background. 79.2% of Polish pupils achieved the FPOI compared with 85.9% of white British pupils.
- At Key Stage 2, pupils from ethnic groups other than white British make up 8.9% of the cohort, 3.4% are Polish and 1.3% Portuguese. On the whole pupils from an ethnic minority do not perform as well as pupils from a white British ethnic background. 78.3% of Polish pupils achieved the CSI compared to 88.9% of white British pupils.
- At Key Stage 3, pupils from ethnic groups other than white British make up 8.8% of the cohort, 3.2% of which are Polish. On the whole pupils from an ethnic minority achieve the same outcomes as pupils from a white British background; however the performance of Polish pupils is slightly better, with 88.9% of Polish pupils achieving the CSI compared with 88.1% of white British pupils.
- At Key Stage 4, pupils from ethnic groups other than white British make up 7.1% of the cohort, 3.2% of which are Polish. On the whole pupils from an ethnic minority perform better than pupils from a white British ethnic background. 56.8% achieved the Level 2+ Threshold compared to 45.5%. Pupils from a Polish ethnic background performed slightly below this with 44.4% of Polish pupils achieved the Level 2+ Threshold.

Learners with Additional Learning Needs (ALN)

- Pupils identified with Special Educational Needs (SEN) are outperformed by pupils not identified with SEN at all key stages.
- When compared with national figures, pupils identified with School Action and School Action Plus within Merthyr Tydfil CBC perform better than pupils identified nationally at Foundation Phase and Key Stage 3.
- At Key Stage 4, pupils identified at all stages of special education needs do not perform as well as pupils nationally.

Children Looked After

The performance of Children Looked After is variable due to the small number of pupils within the cohort. The information below is for children who are looked after by a local authority and educated in MTCBC schools. This cohort may include pupils who are looked after by another local authority.

- 85.7% of Children Looked After achieved the FPOI compared with 85.5% not looked after.
- 61.5% of Children Looked After achieved the CSI compared with 88.8% not looked after.
- 85.7% of Children Looked After achieved the CSI compared with 88.1% not looked after.
- 37.5% of Children Looked After achieved the Level 2+ Threshold at KS4 compared with 46.5% not looked after.

Learners with low attendance

- In line with the national picture, the percentage of pupils achieving key indicators decreases as their attendance decreases.
- At Foundation Phase, 72.9% of pupils with attendance below 90% achieved the foundation phase outcome indicator compared with 88.0% of pupils with attendance of 90% or above.
- At Key Stage 2, 80.2% of pupils with attendance below 90% achieved the core subject indicator compared with 89.7% of pupils with attendance of 90% or above.
- At Key Stage 3, 78.7% of pupils with attendance below 90% achieved the core subject indicator compared with 92.7% of pupils with attendance of 90% or above.

1.3 Wellbeing and attitudes to learning

The current position for wellbeing and attitude to learning is **adequate and needs improvement**

Over the last three years, Estyn judgements for wellbeing have been at least good in most of the schools inspected. 23% of schools were judged to be excellent in this key indicator. No schools have required any follow-up activity related to wellbeing and attitudes to learning over the last 3 years.

Attendance

- Attendance case conferences were held with 9 primary schools to identify barriers to improvement and confirm next steps, as a result of which best practice was collated and shared with all schools. The attendance for over half of the schools improved. 19 primary schools originally bought back into the EWS SLA, with two schools receiving show casing the good practice that exists in their school in order to improve attendance in the MTCBC Contact magazine.
- For 2017/18, 20 schools have currently bought into the EWS SLA, which amounts to a total of 61 hours per week.

Primary attendance

- Primary attendance in 2017/18 was 94.00% which shows a decrease of 0.26 percentage points in comparison to 2016/17, the national figure decreased by 0.33 percentage points. Compared to other local authorities in Wales, Merthyr Tydfil ranked 21 out of 22.
- The difference between the top and bottom performing local authorities is 1.3 percentage points therefore the margins between local authorities are small.
- The gap from the Welsh average has narrowed over the last 3 years.
- When compared with similar schools, 31.8% of schools are above the median, 22.7% of schools are in the third quarter and 45.5% of schools are in the bottom quarter.
- Primary attendance for the 2018/19 academic year is 94.33% at the end of the spring term.

	MTCBC Attendance	Wales Attendance	Difference	LA Rank
2017/18	94.00	94.55	-0.54	21
2016/17	94.26	94.88	-0.63	22
2015/16	94.16	94.90	-0.74	22

Secondary attendance

- Secondary attendance in 2017/18 was 92.40% which shows a decrease of 0.59 percentage points in comparison to 2016/17, the national figure decreased by 0.30 percentage points. This ranked Merthyr Tydfil 22 out of 22 local authorities in Wales.
- The difference between the top and bottom performing local authorities is 2.4 percentage points therefore the margins between local authorities are small.
- The gap from the Welsh average has increased over the last 3 years.

- When compared with similar schools, 1 school is above the median, 2 schools are in the third quarter and 1 school is in the bottom quarter.
- Secondary attendance for the 2018/19 academic year is 92.44% at the end of the spring term.

	MTCBC Attendance	Wales Attendance	Difference	LA Rank
2017/18	92.40	93.77	-1.36	22
2016/17	93.00	94.07	-1.08	22
2015/16	93.39	94.16	-0.77	19

Persistent Absentees

- There has been an increase in the percentage of persistent absentees over the last 3 years in the primary sector.
- The percentage of persistent absentees increased in 2017/18 compared to 2016/17. Information for the 2018/19 academic year to the end of the spring term show a decrease.

Year	Primary persistent absentees	Secondary persistent absentees
2018/19 Sept – End of spring term	2.07%	5.28%
2017/18	1.78%	6.26%
2016/17	1.08%	6.01%

Attendance of specific groups

Gender

- Attendance rates for boys and girls within the primary sector decreased in 2017/18. For the same period in the secondary sector the attendance rate for girls increased and the rate for boys decreased.

	Primary Attendance		Secondary Attendance	
	Girls Attendance	Boys Attendance	Girls Attendance	Boys Attendance
2017/18	94.14%	93.93%	92.44%	91.12%
2016/17	94.38%	94.20%	92.21%	92.18%
2015/16	94.26%	94.17%	92.83%	92.54%

- Up until the end of the spring term 2018/19 attendance rates for girls within the primary sector is 94.49% and for boys is 94.17%. This shows currently an increase in attendance from the end of year figures 2017/18.
- Up until the end of the spring term 2018/19 attendance rates for girls within the secondary sector is 92.71% and for boys is 92.18%. This shows currently an increase in attendance from the end of year figures 2017/18.

Learners with English as an additional language

- Attendance rates for EAL pupils are good. In 2017/18 this was 94.49% for the primary sector and 94.82% for the secondary sector, both of which was higher than the attendance of non EAL pupils. Figures for 2016/17 were 94.55% for the primary sector and 94.82% for the secondary sector.

Eligible for Free School Meals

- Attendance rates for primary pupil's eligible for free school meals have declined over the last three years; however rates are higher than those nationally and have been for the last three years.
- Attendance rates for secondary pupil's eligible for free school meals improved in 2017/18 by 0.1 percentage points; however rates are slightly lower than the national average.

Children Looked After

- Attendance rates for Children Looked After (CLA) for the academic year 2017/18 for the primary sector was 95.6% which shows a decrease of 0.70% from 2016/17. For the secondary sector the figure is 87.9% which shows a decrease of 0.50% from 2016/17. Up until the end of the spring term 2018/19 primary attendance is 95.50% and secondary attendance is 88.40%.

Gypsy Traveller

- For the academic year 2016/17 attendance rates for Gypsy Traveller pupils were 89.90% for the primary sector and 85.30% for the secondary sector. For the academic year 2017/18 attendance rates for the primary sector were 90.5% which shows an increase of 0.60% and attendance rates for the secondary sector were 81.5% which shows a decrease of 3.80%. Up until the end of the spring term 2018/19 attendance rates for the gypsy travellers for the primary sector is 91.10% and for the secondary sector is 89.70%. This has shown a steady increase over the last three years in attendance in the primary sector.

Exclusions/ Managed Moves

Permanent Exclusions

- Permanent exclusion rates over the past 2 academic years have been low, with no permanent exclusions during the 2017/18 academic year and 1 during the 2016/17 academic year.
- Up until the end of the spring term 2019 there were 2 permanent exclusions.

Fixed term exclusions

- There has been a significant reduction in the number of incidents resulting in exclusion for the lengthier period of 6 days or more. In 2017/18 there was one in the primary sector and none in the secondary sector compared to four in the primary sector and one in the secondary sector in 2016/17.
- In the academic year 2018/19 there were three in the secondary sector and one in the primary sector up until the end of the spring term.
- For the academic year 2017/18 there has been an increase in the total number of incidents resulting in an exclusion from Secondary school by 217 to 348. The 2016/17 figure was an increase of 21 on the previous year. There has been an increase in the number of incidents resulting in exclusion for 5 days or fewer of 217 to 347.
- For primary schools, there has been an increase in the total number of incidents resulting in exclusions by 34 to 124 in 2017/18. The 2016/17 figure was an increase of 52 on the previous year. There has been an increase in the number of incidents resulting in exclusion for 5 days or fewer by 33 to 119 in 2017/18. The total number of days lost has increased by 95.5 to 261 in 2017/18.
- For secondary schools, there has been a decrease in the total number of incidents resulting in an exclusion by 122 to 111 for the academic year 2018/19 up until the end of the spring term. There has been a decrease in the number of incidents resulting in exclusion for 5 days or fewer of 239 for the comparative period 2017/18 to 108. For primary schools, there has been an increase in the total number of incidents resulting in exclusions from 34 to 124 in 2017/18. There has been an increase in the number of incidents resulting in exclusion for 5 days or fewer of 17 for the comparative period 2017/18 to 88. The total number of days lost has increased from 95.5 to 261 in 2017/18.

- In 2017/18 exclusions for pupils attending the EOTAS programme have increased from 10 incidents in 2016/17 to 18. The number of days lost due to exclusion has also increased from 24 to 31.5.
- Up until the end of the spring term 2018/19 exclusions for pupils attending the Pupil Referral Unit is 70 incidents and the number of days lost is 114. This shows an increase in the number of exclusions to date which may be due to the change in provision and more robust Behaviour Policy.

Managed Moves

- In 2016/17 there was one unsuccessful and two unsuccessful managed moves within the authority.
- There were three successful MM out of 5 during the Autumn Term 2018/19 and there were 6 successful managed moves; 2 unsuccessful moves and 2 are ongoing during the Spring Term 2018/19.

Bullying Incidents

- Bullying incidents continue to be reported termly, whilst the data indicates there has been an increase in the number of incidents reported to 152 for last academic year, this is partly attributable to a more robust reporting system.
- In 2016/17 there were 152 incidents of bullying reported. In 2017/18 there were 260 incidents of bullying reported. For the academic year 2018/19 there was 121 incidents of bullying reported up until the end of the spring term. This has shown that after a peak in 2017/18 that bullying incidents are decreasing to be more in line of those of previous years.
- Reported incidents of bullying for racism remain low, this is a result of the range of highly effective key activities. The number of racist incidents has decreased by 63pp in the last academic year.
- In 2016/17 there were 7 incidents of racist bullying recorded. In 2017/18 there were 16 incidents of racist bullying recorded. For the academic year 2018/19 there have been 7 racist incidents of bullying reported up until the end of the spring term. This has shown an increase in of bullying incidents over a three year period, should there be further incidents reported during the summer term.
- Positive attitudes towards race equality and combating racism remain successful, this is because of the inclusive attitude where diversity is celebrated and healthy debate is encouraged.

Healthy living

- A majority (14) of primary schools continue to participate in the “Daily Mile” initiative with the focus on improving physical health, wellbeing, engagement and behaviour; those involved have reported an improvement in behaviour and engagement in learning, combined with an increased understanding of the benefits of physical activity. Attendance has also improved in many of these schools when compared to 2015/16.
- There has been a further increase in the access to physical activities outside of school hours, through the partnership approach to street games and Mgirls in the community. This has been recognised through obtaining a national award, there has been an increase of 40 participants on a weekly basis compared to the previous year. All four secondary schools participate in the MGirls programme. The Mgirls programme will now be delivered by a local provider which will enable improved sustainability.
- 12 Young Ambassadors (YA) have been successfully recruited and deployed across schools and community clubs to promote the benefits of physical activity and to support the delivery. Four representatives attended the National YA conference, one has joined the Hockey Wales YA programme and one was selected to undertake on a coaching role in America. As of the academic year 2017/18 there are now 30 Young Ambassadors; with BHHS and ATHS leading the way with this.
- As a result, of the disability sport roadshow over half of the schools have positively engaged with the programme, for example, Cyfarthfa High School achieved a National Bronze medal in the Wales Inclusive Zone Basketball programme. This has been combined with an increase in the number of mainstream pupils attending community provision. As of the academic year 2017/18 there are three schools piloting the Disability Sport Road Show, with another three due to become involved as of September 2018.

- Around half of schools have undertaken Disability Inclusion Training, with a focus on delivering an inclusive approach to sport.
- All schools continue to be engaged with the Healthy Schools Programme, with many schools achieving phase 4 and above, one of which has achieved the National Quality Award.
- Many primary schools have engaged with the Crucial Crew programme in 2017, with over 600 pupils engaging in learning about essential personal safety facts and to further support pupils to live in the wider community.
- Pen-Y-Dre High School was identified as an excellent practice case study as part of the Estyn Thematic report on Healthy Relationship education, highlighting strong partnerships with specialist agencies who support the school to implement the nine elements of the whole-education approach to tackling violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence as set out in WG guidance.

Pupil Voice

- Thirteen primary schools currently engage with the Young Leader programme, whereby Young Leaders are responsible for delivering sessions. There are currently 125 Young Leaders across the authority who have been successfully recruited and have delivered sessions for the throughout the academic year. The Young Leaders Programme is available in 15 schools, involving 150 Young Leaders approx.
- Half of schools are engaged in the Rights Respecting Schools, enabling an ethos of mutual respect whereby pupils and staff feel listened to and valued. Two schools, Heolgerrig Primary and Trelewis Primary have witnessed an improvement in attendance and a reduction in exclusions since becoming a Rights Respecting School.
- 95 pupils from schools across the authority attended the Student Conference last academic year. Of those in attendance all felt more informed about making choices that impact on their health and wellbeing.
- Participation of young people within the community continues to be strong with significant improvements this year in the number of young people registering as members of the borough wide youth forum.
- Approximately 2,500 young people participated in the election of the next youth mayor compared to 37 in 2016. This was a result of listening to young people and developing a new approach in partnership with the borough wide forum.
- The youth service continues to engage with more young people (21% this equates to 2,257 young people) than the Welsh average which is 16% and identifies that more young people achieve accredited outcomes (15% this equates to 339 young people)) within its services than the Welsh average (10%). This includes young people who are able to access service in the community through the medium of Welsh.
- Merthyr Tydfil Borough Wide Youth Forum (MTBWYF) continues to flourish. This is the 10th year the county borough has a Youth Mayor and the engagement of this group at all levels including scrutiny is a strength.

Participation

- 21% (2190) of young people aged 11-25 across the borough engage with the Youth Service which is 5% above the Wales average. Engagement levels have improved since 2015/16 and have been above the Welsh average for the last 2 years.

Other

- Stronger links with the Welsh first language primary schools have been developed as a result of a closer working relationship between the authority and the Urdd, this has also facilitated the promotion and the increased use of the Welsh language amongst the English medium schools. As of the academic year 2017/18 the Welsh Medium schools are part of this programme and Gellifaelog Primary school has taken the lead with Welsh language on the yard.
- There has been 30% reduction in teenage pregnancies over the past five years (between 2010 and 2015) this has been a result of the focused, coordinated and targeted approach by many agencies across Merthyr Tydfil. Outreach services have effectively engaged with young people through education, support and services offered. Across Cwm Taf, the school nursing service and healthy schools team continue to support the school PSE programme and assist schools in the delivery of sex and relationships education. There were five teenage pregnancies during the last academic year, all of whom were supported; two received allocated Lead Worker support as part of the prevention of NEETs programme.
- There was an increase in the rates of terminations of pregnancy for females aged 15-17 years, which exceeded the national average. Termination rates per 1,000 were 11 for Merthyr Tydfil, which was the above were the Wales Average of 8.5.
- The Children Looked After Health service ensures that the statutory health assessments of all children who become looked after are undertaken in a timely manner. The health needs/appointments etc. for those children who move frequently are coordinated to ensure that there is no gap in the provision of any required or identified health service. Support is available to Social Workers, Foster Carers and voluntary agencies and all professionals who seek advice. The service has been understaffed over the past few years however; the need to prioritise this vulnerable group has resulted in an improved staffed service.
- A minority of primary schools have engaged with the “Speak out stay safe” delivered by the NSPCC. The aim of this programme is to make children aware of the importance of sharing their concerns especially around the area of abuse and what constitutes abuse.
- Many schools have obtained the Eco-Schools green flags. In 2016/17 10 schools achieved a new flag, as a result of increasing environmental awareness across the educational community.
- 80 sessions of EP time were provided for critical incidents across the authority during the last academic year. In addition, the joint EPS has provided 20 sessions of mindfulness training, 4 sessions of CAHMS liaison and 4 sessions on Dealing with Worries. 14 sessions of training to manage self-harm and suicide were also delivered to school staff.
- A majority of schools are accessible for wheelchair access, and adaptations are being made to the remaining schools in response to pupil need. However, some schools do not lend themselves to wheelchair access due to the age, site and layout.
- Participation rates within preschool childcare have increased slightly since 2014 by 5% to 36% according to the 2017 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment.

Key Priorities for Improvement

- To improve standards, especially at the end of Key Stage 4
- To improve rates of attendance including that for persistent absentees
- To reduce the number of exclusions and days lost in primary and secondary schools
- To make more effective use of Capita within Inclusion and ALN Services

Evidence

- Welsh Government statistics
- LA Core Data Sets
- AWCD sets

- GIANTS
- Scrutiny Committee Report – Performance Report – Corporate Plan: Standards of attainment 2018, January 2019
- Cabinet Report - Flying Start Foundation Phase Outcomes 17/18, January 2019
- Cabinet Report - NEET's Prevention and Performance, January 2019
- Inspection Overview 2014 to date
- Foundation Phase Group Summary
- Key Stage 2 Group Summary
- Key Stage 3 Group Summary
- Key Stage 4 Group Summary
- AWCDs

Admissions

- Managed moves protocol, Dec 2014
- Protocol for changing year groups, July 2016

Attendance

- Attendance self-evaluation audit tool 2017-18
- Monthly attendance report, June 2018
- Good practice for improving attendance 2016-17
- Attendance Training, May 2018
- Pupil Attendance Handbook 2017-2020
- School guide to sickness absence 2017
- Managing sickness absence from schools

Behaviour

- Behaviour self-evaluation audit tool 2017-18
- Exclusions summary, June 2018
- Key messages for all pupils, June 2018
- Targets and performance to June 2018
- WG Statistical Release, Permanent and Fixed term exclusions 2015-16
- Exclusions – Vulnerable groups
- Exclusions handbook
- Matrix 2017-18
- Positive Behaviour Management guidance
- Toolbox for Mental Health introduction
- Toolbox for Mental Health contents
- Top ten tips for Making your schools and colleges inclusive for Trans people
- Transgender Inclusion Toolkit and Guidance

EAL & GT

- Cabinet Report, March 2018
- GT attainment 2015-17
- Gypsy Traveller spending plan 2017
- MEAG spending plan 2017-18
- Key Stage 4 EAL progress

SAFEGUARDING

- Schools safeguarding policy 2018-19
- SER for schools 2017-18
- Self-evaluation 2017-18
- Safeguarding self-assessment forms
- Draft Cwm Taff Professional concerns policy
- Professional Strategy revised guidance
- Guidance on the process for responding to an allegation against education professionals

WELLBEING

- A review of healthy relationships education, June 2017

- Cabinet Report Period Poverty, June 2018
- Daily mile data 2017
- Eco School status
- Healthcare needs guidance
- Merthyr Tydfil schools, July 2018
- Status Merthyr Tydfil schools, July 2018
- Student Council conference pupil report 2016
- Future Generations Well-Being brochure
- WG Statistical Release Youth Work 2016-17
- CSA template Merthyr Tydfil 2017
- Cabinet Report: NEET Prevention and Performance Report, Aug 2018
- NEETs Strategy
- Participation Report 2017-18
- Cabinet Report: Flying Start 2017-18
- Youth Service strategy 2017-20
- Cabinet Report: Overview of the progress of Youth Support Services since the Estyn Monitoring Visit 2015, June 2016

INSPECTION AREA 2 – QUALITY OF EDUCATION SERVICES

2.1 Support for school improvement

The current position for support for school improvement is **adequate and needs improvement**. The strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement.

- Effective relationships exist between the Local Authority and the local consortium (CSC) in addition to the collaborative culture and positive relationships that have been forged between schools and the local consortium. As a result the Local Authority knows its schools very well. Policies, systems and processes are developed in a collegiate manner and the Local Authority has an accurate understanding of the need to work in partnership with schools so that all that the Local Authority's vision for ongoing school improvement is clear and understood by all of the education community.
- The Local Authority in partnership with the Central South Consortium has continued to provide effective monitoring, challenge, support and intervention for all schools across the borough, which is bespoke to the needs of the school. Categorisation processes are robust and accurate and are carried out in a transparent manner in partnership with the HT, Challenge Adviser and Governing Body. In addition, all schools are provided with support packages which fit the needs of their school well and are agreed in a collaborative manner by the Headteacher, Challenge Adviser and Chair of Governors. The work of Challenge advisers and the reports they produce is monitored closely to ensure consistency of approach across all schools. As a result, schools are provided with very good levels of support for ongoing school improvement and this is evidenced from positive outcomes in inspections in recent years and also through an increase in the number of green schools across the LA over the last three years.
- The Local Authority in partnership with the regional consortium identify, address and manage the changing needs and circumstances of schools well and this has resulted slight increase in the number of schools needing a more intensive package of support over the last three years. Support for Red and Amber schools consists of bespoke challenge and support provided by the CSC Challenge Adviser, deployment of CSC Accelerated Progress Leads and the effective use of CSC Strategic Advisers who provide Literacy, Numeracy, Science and DCF support. Red and Amber schools also benefit from school to school support which is brokered by CSC. Red and Amber schools are required to attend a termly (half termly for red schools) School Improvement Forum which is made up of the Challenge Adviser, Senior Challenge Adviser, Accelerated Progress Lead and the Chair of the Governing Body. Senior leaders present a wide range of evidence to demonstrate the progress that the school is making towards meeting its priorities for improvement. The School Improvement Forum for red schools is also attended by the Chief Education Officer. Schools report that they find the School Improvement Meetings very beneficial and that such meetings provide rigour, challenge and a clear focus on the journey to achieving school improvement priorities. As a result, many of the schools who are in the red or amber category are making strong progress towards meeting the recommendations in their respective support plans.
- The Local Authority in partnership with CSC give good attention to improving the quality of teaching. Many schools are part of School Improvement Groups (SIG) each of which has a focus on securing improvements in many aspects of teaching e.g. pedagogy, assessment, literacy and numeracy. As a result, outcomes for teaching and learning experiences are at least good in many schools as evidenced in by Estyn inspections in recent years.
- Attainment and progress data is used effectively to challenge and support schools. A wide range of further information from local authority service areas and the Central South Consortium is used successfully to determine the capacity for improvement in schools and provide appropriately differentiated support for individual schools dependent upon their area of need.

- School level and pupil level targets continue to be challenged in each school as part of the national categorisation process and progress towards these targets are reviewed termly by all Challenge Advisers. LA officers are kept up to date with the changes to target setting and interim performance measures at KS4 through updates via the consortium.
- Termly 'Team around the School' meetings with Challenge Advisers and Local Authority officers to discuss various issues for each school in relation to school improvement, performance data, health and safety, buildings and finance issues; providing the local authority with opportunity to assess the capability of a school's leadership team in relation to driving through agreed future improvements. However, there is a need to ensure all officers understand the need to address follow-up actions from meetings in order to drive improvements.
- The Local Authority in partnership with the regional consortium provide a comprehensive Professional Learning offer for colleagues at all levels and at all stages in their career e.g. HLTA and TA programmes. A number of schools across the LA are designated CSC 'Hub' schools that deliver professional learning programmes to other schools across the consortium. Leadership across the authority is supported by access to programmes such as NPQH, Aspiring Headteachers and Improving Leadership Skills of Deputy Heads. Access to such programmes over time has contributed to the judgements on leadership being at least good in many schools in recent Estyn inspections. Bespoke support for leadership is brokered when needed through coaching and mentoring and shortages in key personnel in some schools has been addressed by engaging the expertise of highly experienced and extremely effective colleagues from across the LA. This is impacting positively on improving the quality of leadership and building capacity to affect change. Formal federation of schools in the borough has also secured improvements in leadership e.g. St Mary's and St Illtyd's. The memorandum of understanding that exists within the Taff Bargoed Learning Alliance has had a significant impact on improving standards of teaching, learning and leadership. However, improving the effectiveness of middle leaders in some schools and the impact they have on improving outcomes remains an area for development.
- Schools are encouraged to share best practice through informal sessions via the primary and secondary Headteacher forums.
- Schools across the authority are being well supported to meet the needs of national reform via the regional consortium. Most schools have engaged effectively in preparing for the new curriculum and have an accurate picture of their strengths and areas for development through the use of evaluation tools. Many schools are engaging well with the Schools as Learning Organisations agenda and this supported effectively by the professional learning offer from the local consortium. Most schools work well as part of their clusters and are planning appropriately to embrace the ALN Transformation. In addition, the consortia's ALN Transformational Lead supports LA officers, schools and Challenge Adviser very well in ensuring that the information disseminated to schools is of a very high quality. LA officers have accompanied Challenge Advisers on their summer term visits to schools to discuss preparedness for ALN transformation. This joint approach between LA and the consortium ensures consistency of key messages to schools and allows the LA to provide robust support and challenge. Self-evaluation and improvement planning in all schools continues to be linked explicitly to the Challenge Framework via the Central South Consortium.
- The local authority's Partnership Agreement has been agreed by all stakeholders, it is effective in supporting, monitoring and challenging all schools.
- The Local Authority continues to make effective use of statutory powers to challenge the leadership and management in those schools whose performance is causing concern. Half-termly Risk Management Conferences are undertaken with the Head of Legal Services, Human Resources, Senior Challenge Adviser, the Education Portfolio Lead and Chief Education Officer. At these meetings, schools with identified risks are discussed and further support is planned and reviewed; the attendance at these half-termly meetings has been inconsistent and thus the challenge has not always been provided in a timely manner.

- Timely use of informal warning notices continues to be used across the authority and the LA continues to use its statutory powers effectively to challenge underperformance. To date in 2018-19 there have been two informal warning notices issued to secondary schools across the borough.
- To date in 2018-19, of the schools that have received Estyn inspections, two have been placed in Estyn review and one other received 'Excellent' judgements for all five inspections areas and has been asked to produce a case study. There is a good correlation between the local authority's judgements on schools and those of Estyn.
- The Authority works with its school improvement partner, CSC in delivering governor training including development support for school governors specifically around the reform journey e.g. ALN transformation. Many governing bodies continue to improve their skills in holding school leaders to account for their performance through an increased understanding of a range of performance data. In these schools, governors are continuing to use data well to ensure more rigorous performance management arrangements for Headteachers. However, this remains inconsistent across all schools.

2.2 Support for vulnerable learners

The current provision for the support for vulnerable learners is **adequate and needs improvement** because although there are strengths within the support provided for vulnerable learners which outweigh the weaknesses, there remain important aspects that require further improvement.

- Strategies to ensure the LA tracks the attainment of vulnerable pupils appropriately and provision for pupils with additional needs is a priority for development.
- A range of universal services work well together across the local authority to provide seamless, targeted and timely support for schools, pupils and parents for example, a School's Counselling service is provided with The Exchange to support pupils and families who are considered to be vulnerable. Since April 2018 the Schools' Counselling service is a jointly commissioned service with Families First community counselling. (The service was previously provided by Eye to Eye.) The new model works toward the integrated service approach promoted by Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health board. YP Core Points scoring data has improved by 2.4 points since 2016 and 1.13 points since the new contract in April 2018. However the service has also seen a 46.2% increase in referrals when compared with the previous 3 year period which has led to increased waiting times for the service. Joint collaboration has successfully continued with the Health Services and Rhondda Cynon Taff, which has further supported targeted enhanced speech and language therapy for pupils, with 3 pupils receiving an enhanced service for specific language impairment and a further 30 for ASD in schools during 2018-19
- The authority has a programme for the evaluation of all ALN services provided for, or commissioned by, the authority. This has led to continued improvements in the services and increased commissioning of services through another local authority in order to meet needs.
- Targeted support for vulnerable learners particularly those identified as having English as an additional language and Gypsy Travellers has resulted in improved levels of engagement, behaviour and achievement. As a result attendance has improved for these groups of learners and the length of engagement in secondary education has continued, attendance rates for 93.8% of pupils exceeded the 200 minimum sessions. The majority of Gypsy traveller pupils had over 90% attendance for the academic year.
- The Youth Support Services continue to be effective in ensuring children and young people's wellbeing remains a priority in the work that is undertaken. All pupils including vulnerable learners continue to have access to enrichment type activities through the forms of music, sporting events, off site visits and art workshops, these aim to further improve self-confidence and self-esteem. There continues to be worthwhile provision of services around safeguarding, sports, the arts and healthy eating ensuring learners access a broad and balanced curriculum.

- The local authority continues to use a range of data to identify effectively; the needs and progress of vulnerable learners over time, including children looked after. The Local Authority provides purposeful support and challenge for schools through the work of the Challenge Advisers who draw on a range of data to address underperformance of groups of vulnerable learners. Early identification, evaluation and intervention of pupils with mild to moderate additional learning needs continues to be undertaken via detailed graduated responses within schools.
- Very good pupil-focused support is provided to schools and families for the early identification, evaluation and intervention for vulnerable learners. Support for families has also been provided through the family liaison officers, MIA, Intensive Support for Families and WEFO funded projects since 2011. All policies and protocols continue to be reviewed on an annual basis ensuring that provision meets the needs of schools and various groups of vulnerable learners. A review of Enhanced Support provision is currently being undertaken across the LA, in collaboration with schools, with a view to identifying a streamlined and more cost effective means of allocating support.
- The local authority continues to promote positive attitudes towards race equality and strategies to combat racism; in schools, diversity is celebrated and healthy debate is encouraged. As a result of key activities undertaken, reported incidents of bullying in relation to racism remains low. The key activities that are in place to improve wellbeing in general and bullying include activities at a whole school level which includes the PSE curriculum; Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL), Circle Time, Philosophy 4 Children along with Show Racism the Red Card events. At an individual targeted level activities include Emotional Literacy Support Assistants delivering counselling, Restorative Justice, Mindfulness and Student Assistant Programme. At a specialist level activities include support from the Behaviour Team, Educational Psychologists, Children Looked After support, Play therapy, along with the use of Key Workers and/or Learning Coaches.
- The local authority Outreach Service has delivered Positive Behaviour Support Training to all schools in Merthyr, along with Merthyr College and the EOTAS provision. The outreach service with an outside provider (Helen Sanderson Associates (HSA)) has delivered Person Centred Practice training to 26 out of 29 schools within the authority, in order to ensure a consistent approach to Person Centred Planning (PCP) across the authority; as a result of the training, all Annual Reviews are conducted using a PCP approach ensuring reviews are effective and transitional planning is timely and supported. This approach has also been rolled out to Early Years settings and Merthyr College, in order to ensure a consistent approach across the LA. All Early Years' settings have been offered PCP training and nearly all settings (approx. 90%) attended. One Page Profiles are being piloted on entry to settings, with a view to have One Page Profiles included with all transition documents by Summer 2019.
- Twenty primary schools are now part of the local authority EWS SLA, as well the Ty Dysgu Homfray and Ty Dysgu Dowlais. Two of these schools have been recognised by Estyn as demonstrating good practice in improving pupil's attendance. Attendance case conferences were held with school leaders from nine primary schools to discuss attendance strategies, identify barriers for improvement and confirm next steps to secure further attendance improvement.
- Attendance has decreased slightly in 2017/18. An action plan has been produced identifying actions to improve performance. This includes a corporate approach to an Attendance Awareness Raising Campaign. The provision of monthly authority and school level data on attendance, which has facilitated in improved targeting of resources will continue e.g. reduction of persistent absentees; monthly communication with school leaders to disseminate successful strategies for further improvement along with a focus on attendance at all challenge adviser visits to schools. Strategies also include increased involvement of the Governor with responsibility for attendance and the School Council in attendance matters; schools routinely challenging and requesting medical evidence for sickness absences; earlier engagement with the FPN process; continued opportunities for rewarding pupils with good attendance.

- However, despite the engagement of all schools in the strategies to improve attendance, as a local authority we are still ranked 22 out of 22 in Wales for primary and secondary attendance. As of the Spring Term 2019 there are currently 6 schools that are not engaging with the FPN process.
- The local authority has continued to work closely with all schools, but in particular the secondary sector, to reduce the number and avoid lengthy or permanent exclusions. Excluded pupils are swiftly provided with alternative high quality education through robust processes for managed moves, provision in a specialist setting or special tuition. Managed moves have been fully embraced by three of the four secondary schools and a number of successful transfers between the schools have ensured pupils are achieving success in their new school. In conjunction with this, at key stage 4 alternative curriculum routes continue to be explored for pupils displaying significant disaffection or very challenging behaviour.
- Under the new operation of a PRU the EOTAS Management Board has been reconfigured and will operate with representatives from the secondary sector, Social Services, the Police, the Youth Offending Team, local authority officers, staff from the provision and a parent representative. It is the role of the Management Board to ensure that a range of stakeholders contribute towards shaping the education and experiences of the learners within the provision. However, due to the nature of the provision, often learners are not able to access the full academic curriculum and is a provision that will be further reviewed in the coming term.
- The EOTAS setting, continues to be well supported by the youth offending team who form part of the management board and contribute to key decisions in relation to the setting. A more appropriate curriculum has been developed with external providers contributing to the timetable on a regular basis; bespoke timetables are implemented for pupils where necessary in order to reflect their individual strengths and to increase motivation. There has been an **increase** in the total number of exclusions issued from 10 in 2016/17 to 18 in 2017/18.
- The alternative provision in Pen Y Dre High School has resulted in a reduction of exclusions and has also resulted in no Year 7 pupil requiring education provision in the EOTAS setting.
- Effective and timely arrangements continue to be in place for transition back into school for pupils who have been excluded, Children Looked After, refugee children and those who were previously electively home educated. The local authority continues to hold weekly Clearing Panels attended by a range of professional representatives, which provide a robust system for addressing complex cases, including moves into the local authority and emergency cases/changes in circumstances. These regular panel meetings ensure that individual cases are dealt with promptly, with input and advice from a range of relevant education professionals. However, pupils that moved into MTCBC from another authority do not always have timely plans in place to accommodate their transition into school and were therefore referred for Special Tuition.
- There continues to be agreed processes and procedures in place for those pupils who are electively home educated. The Advisory Teacher with this area of responsibility maintains a register of pupils electively educated at home in order to monitor and track pupil progress, local authority officers liaise regularly to ensure accurate information is retained and that appropriate support is provided for these pupils.
- The local authority continues to conduct statutory assessments in accordance with the SEN Code of Practice and in an effective and timely manner. 97% or more of statutory assessments that have been undertaken since 2014 have been completed within statutory timescales, unless an exception has been granted due to ongoing resolutions.
- All pupils with a Statement of SEN are provided with additional provision to which they are entitled. Provision is specific in statements and the annual review process is robust. All Young People contribute towards their Statutory Assessment and Annual Reviews, in line with person centred practice.
- Following a review of LRBs, the need for specialist provision for pupils with complex SEBD needs in schools within the local authority has been addressed. The new provisions are being embedded and have, to date, resulted in a 50% reduction of pupils requiring costly out of county provision.

- Work is being undertaken to ensure information is shared with mainstream settings from the health services prior to pupils with complex needs starting school. However, for a number of pupils with complex additional learning needs this information is not timely.
- The local authority continues to work closely with outside education providers, partnership services and support services including Children's Social Services and Children Looked After Education Support services, to ensure children are well placed and closely monitored and reviewed.
- Advice for individual parents and carers with children with additional learning needs continues to be good, they are supported well through the process and continue to work in partnership with schools. Very good pupil-focused support is provided to schools and families for the early identification, evaluation and intervention of pupils with additional learning needs. Support for families has also been provided through the family liaison officers, MIA and WEFO funded projects since 2011. All policies and protocols are reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that provision meets the needs of schools and pupils with additional learning needs.
- Parent Partnership continues to be embedded across all ALN and Inclusion Teams and has contributed to a reduction in SEN Tribunals, which continue to remain low with 1 tribunal in process. However cases which are at risk of tribunal are significantly increasing. This is partly due to the significant increase in requests for statutory assessments (a 67% increase over the last 5 years). It is worth noting that there has also been a significant increase in the number of requests that did not meet criteria (1 in 2015, compared with 30 in 2018-19). The local authority continues to work very closely with SNAP Cymru to support parents and provide high quality impartial information, advice and guidance to allow them to make informed decisions and resolve disputes without recourse to complaint or tribunal.
- The local authority has reviewed the current practice and arrangements for parent partnership work, mediation and conflict resolution across the five authorities as a result of the review of current practice, key actions have been implemented including the development of a toolkit on Dispute Resolution for schools and information for parents. 100% of schools have engaged in Dispute Resolution Training.
- The LA is fully engaged with the CSC ALN Reform action plan and is on track to meet targets for September 2020 implementation.
- Support and training has been provided in relation to positive behaviour management for all staff deployed within learning resource bases across the authority, which has seen a reduction in the number of requests for support from the behaviour support team. Accredited Manual Handling training continues to be delivered by local authority officers to school staff across the authority, ensuring the safety of pupils and staff where pupils have limited mobility and/or personal care needs. Termly ALNCO Forums continue to be held to provide support and training to all colleagues appointed to the role; in addition, all newly appointed ALNCOs participated in the induction training programme ensuring a consistent approach to the role across the authority.
- Safeguarding arrangements and governance continue to be robust and are in compliance with WG guidance. The local authority continues to effectively meet safeguarding regulations and ensures that all school staff remain in compliance with training requirements. All school governing bodies have adopted the Cwm Taf exemplar Child Safeguarding Policy and have engaged in the Safeguarding self-evaluation process ensuring a consistency of approach.
- Radicalisation training has been delivered to local authority and staff employed in schools; all schools have engaged with this training which has ensured current and up to date information is shared with all school staff and school leaders are aware of the process to follow if concerns are raised.
- The Child Safeguarding Policy and self-evaluation audit tool have been updated in light of the Prevent Duty. This audit continues to be undertaken on an annual basis and enables schools to monitor and evaluate their own safeguarding arrangements. All schools continue to have Designated Senior Persons (DSP) with responsibility for safeguarding.

- Advice and guidance is provided on the content of risk assessments, including the risk assessments that are linked to Educational Visits (Evolve). The LA has a Safeguarding Officer who is the Local Authority's Designated Officer for Safeguarding and the Inclusion Manager is the Education lead officer, both officers provide consistent advice and support to schools.
- The Inclusion team have produced guidance for schools on the process to follow when an allegation is made against a member of staff; additional information has been produced to enable schools to support staff in the aftermath of such an allegation, ensuring staff wellbeing is paramount. This has been reviewed in light of recent changes.
- The local authority has a clear Safer Recruitment process and monitors compliance ensuring all staff employed are suitably qualified and the necessary safety checks are undertaken.
- The education department continues to be represented on the Cwm Taf Safeguarding Board and the various associated sub groups ensuring up to date awareness of new policies and protocols. The Safeguarding Forum for schools continues to meet to share current safeguarding policies and processes and to disseminate best practice. Up to date information, policies and protocols in respect of Safeguarding are regularly shared with all schools. Information and resources in relation to Anti-bullying and safeguarding weeks are shared with schools annually to ensure continued participation and that learners are able to make informed choices in relation to related issues.
- The Corporate Safeguarding Group continues to meet to ensure safeguarding and the promotion of the welfare of children and adults are incorporated into the work plan of all departments within the authority. The various work plans are regularly monitored and reviewed to provide local authority officers and various members of the Council with up to date information which shared with a number of stakeholders.
- Radicalisation training has been delivered to local authority and staff employed in schools; all schools have engaged with this training which has ensured current and up to date information is shared with all school staff and school leaders are aware of the process to follow if concerns are raised.

2.3 Other Education Support Services

The current position for Other Education Support Services is **adequate and needs improvement**; although strengths outweigh weaknesses, some important aspects that require further improvement remain.

- There is good provision of services around, PSE, sport, the arts and healthy lifestyles.
- Engagement with the Eco Schools Awards remains high. 20 out of 28 schools have Green flag status. These awards nurture positive attitudes to the environment, and develop and active global citizenship.
- All pupils, including vulnerable groups of pupils, have access to enrichment type activities e.g. Music, sporting events, off site visits and Art Workshops. This improves self-confidence and self-esteem.
- Targeted support for groups of learners has resulted in improved levels of engagement, behaviour and achievement, specifically among pupils for whom English is in additional language and for Gypsy Travellers. As a result, attendance for Gypsy Travellers has improved and engagement in education has continued into secondary school for longer.
- As a result of key activities in school, reported incidents of bullying for racism remain low.
- Working with colleagues in the LA and Barnados to identify and highlight the issues faced by young carers in schools has led to the identification of over 100 Young Carers with the securing of support and Champions for this cohort. As a result pupils and their families are able to access additional support.
- The data provides a detailed understanding of attendance trends and is analysed by variables including gender, school year and groups of learners (eFSM, CLA, gypsy traveller etc). The monthly analysis provided has facilitated in improved targeting of resources.

- Attendance Case conferences have been held with nine primary schools to identify barriers to improvement and confirm next steps. As a result four of these schools have seen an improvement in their attendance.
- Pen Y Dre High School was asked to submit a “Best Practice Case Study” to Estyn to share their work around wellbeing and healthy relationships. Estyn commented that the school’s strategies to improve attendance were effective and that parents and pupils felt highly valued and include in the life of the school.
- Youth support services have been highly effective in reducing the NEETS population. The number of NEETs has reduced to 1.3% and 0 unknowns in 17/18. Effective features include good partnership working with schools and careers Wales, Early Intervention Toolkit which starts in year 7 and a comprehensive tracking systems which used well to target support.
- Attendance rates within flying start are high and in the top quartile compared to the rest of Wales
- Some intervention programmes are now benchmarking impact on attendance utilising Capita 1 system with 46% improving their attendance. Despite key activities, attendance has not improved. The key activities are monthly borough and school level data on attendance shared with all schools including governors and the implementation of a wide range of effective strategies in nearly all schools
- Effective guidance, support and training for behaviour management in schools is provided through a comprehensive training programme on Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) led by the outreach service. The implementation of Person Centred Practices and PBS has resulted in improved behaviour and a fall in exclusions and the number of days lost due to an exclusion. e.g. Cyfarthfa High School – *case studies and inspection of Greenfield special school*.
- The authority has remodelled the behaviour support team to work in partnership with the outreach service from Greenfield Special School and with the Educational Psychology service so that advice to schools is supportive and timely. As a result pupils accessing support are making rapid progress – *case studies*
- As a result of key activities, permanent **exclusions** are rare and time lost to fixed term exclusions has reduced significantly in the secondary and primary sector. The key activities are: monthly borough and school level data on exclusions is shared with all schools including governors, as well as Challenge Advisers and appropriate LA staff.
- Excluded pupils are provided swiftly with alternative high quality education through robust processes for managed moves, provision in a specialist setting and special tuition.
- The alternative provision in Pen Y Dre has reduced exclusions by more than half.
- In the EOTAS setting, the number of days lost due to an exclusion and the number of exclusions have reduced. The provision is supported well by the youth offending team who sit on the management board. During the academic year of 2018/19 the number of incidents that have resulted in an exclusion has risen but this is partly attributable to the Head of Centre having adopted a more consistent and robust Behaviour Policy, as well as the result of an extremely challenging pupil in the provision.
- Engagement with youth services and accreditation rates remain above Welsh averages
- The regular review of evaluation of youth services ensures there is a good range of opportunities for young people to access programmes which offer accreditation or recognition for learning and participation, and personal support, advice and guidance
- Restructuring of family support services has increased access to single intervention services for young people resulting in
 - increased access to resilience programmes in high schools
 - a joint community based counselling service for pupils and their families in order to increase access to therapeutic services
 - the development of an emotional health and wellbeing pathway across agencies to be more effective in meeting the needs of young people’s health and wellbeing.

- The authority's arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements and all schools have trained staff and nominated leads.
- Appropriate policies and procedures are in place and reviewed with Headteachers to ensure guidance is clear and adhered to.
- All schools share their safeguarding audits annually with the local authority are provided with support and advice and they meet all the requirements.
- School risk assessments are routinely quality assured and are of a good standard.
- The LA has a clear Safer Recruitment process and monitors schools and they meet the requirements
- The LA has established a Corporate Safeguarding Group to develop relationships between all departments to ensure safeguarding and the promotion of welfare of both children and adults. This group monitors performance in relation to Safeguarding across the Council.
- Current safeguarding policies and processes and good practice are shared through the Safeguarding Forum for schools
- Safeguarding Training has been delivered to Governors, and LA officers working in Catering and Transport to ensure that all those working with children or vulnerable adults know their safeguarding responsibilities.
- Radicalisation training has been delivered to LA and school staff; 380 staff have attended.
- Safeguarding training for governors has been better attended because of the new model of cluster based bespoke training. 53 attended the Afon Taf cluster meeting in January 2017 where previously attendance was around two to three at training sessions.

Planning of School Places and School Organisation

The processes for managing school organisation and planning of school places is firmly established in the authority.

- Surplus Places in the Primary Sector for EM schools are 10.4% which is better than the Welsh Average (WA) 13.3%, Rank 8/22.
- The local authority is ranked 2/22 for WM Primary schools with only 1% surplus places, WA 16.4%.
- No schools are oversubscribed but six schools (five Primary and one secondary) are within 5% of capacity. The local authority has successfully bid for grant monies to reduce infant class sizes in two of these Primary School which includes capital funding to build a classroom extension which will also increase the capacity of the school to support future growth beyond the term of the grant period.
- Only two primary schools and one secondary school have significant surplus places (>25%)
- Two of the three schools with significant surplus places are being addressed in the 21st Century Schools Programme Band A & B, the other school is a small rural school and work is being scoped to relocate an early year pre-school setting within the school as part of the Early Years Capital Bid.
- Pupil projection information in the local authority is produced annually for the Primary sector covering 2018-2023 and for the Secondary sector covering 2018-2028. These projections are accurate, typically within 1% of actual pupil data, and are submitted annually to WG as part of the surplus places and capacity return.
- Information from the Local Development Plan (2016-2031) and discussions with the Planning department have helped to improve the robustness of pupil number forecasting for the purpose of planning school places and developing the 21st Century Schools Band B SOP.
- In order to ensure the local authority continues to meet demand for WM places over the short to medium term classroom provision has been reconfigured within the two Welsh Medium Primary schools to increase capacity in both schools and this capacity is projected to be sufficient to meet demand for Welsh medium places until at least 2024. Also one of the schools that will have an additional classroom built from Reducing Infant Class Sizes grant monies is Welsh Medium (completed from Autumn Term 2019).

- As detailed within the WESP the local authority are exploring all sources of capital funding available from WG to help to increase the supply of WM places within schools to help encourage and meet future demand over the medium and long term.
- The local authority does not have its own WM Secondary School and both WM primary schools are feeder schools for Ysgol Rhydywaun in RCT. Merthyr pupils represent 44% of the schools cohort in 2018, up from 39% in 2014. The local authority shares information on Welsh Medium places with RCTCBC
- The LA's Special school (Greenfield Special) has seen a significant growth in pupil numbers since 2012 and consequently are using two demountable classrooms and the neighbouring ICC building. These numbers have however stabilised over the last two academic years, and pupil projection systems continue to be developed for the special school in order to improve the planning of special school places over the medium to long term.
- The entry/exit and Banding criteria for pupils requiring special school provision are also being reviewed in order to provide clarity and consistency with regards to the appropriate school placement.
- The local authority has reviewed the sufficiency of specialist places in mainstream schools and is currently piloting revised arrangements over the period Sep 2018 – August 20. Significant reallocation of resources has been required to enable this pilot to be resourced over the period of the pilot.
- There is an informal federation between Bedlinog Primary and Trelewis Primary school with an executive Headteacher working across both schools. Discussions are ongoing with both Governing Bodies regarding moving forward with a formal federated arrangement.

School Buildings, Capital and R&M

- The local authority is currently in the final year (2019-20) of a five year rolling programme to update the condition surveys of all its buildings.
- The suitability and sufficiency assessments for schools buildings are updated as part of the LAs annual School Premises Data Return to WG. Based on current information the local authority has 17 out of 28 school buildings (61%) in conditions A and B (Good/Satisfactory). 89% of schools have facilities in suitability category A or B (Good/Satisfactory)
- The Afon Taf Band A refurbishment project was completed August 2017.
- Ysgol Y Graig Band A New Build project, which will co-locate the current early years pre-school and maintained nursery provision on the same site as the main school, is scheduled to commence July 2019 and to be completed August 2020.
- The condition, suitability and sufficiency of schools informs the LAs priorities for capital investment as detailed in the LAs 21st Century Schools Strategic Outline Programme (SOP) for Band B of the 21st Century Schools Programme which has also been approved by WG.
- The LA has approved match funding over its Medium Term Financial Plan to finance the £56.6 M Band B programme and has identified efficiency savings from related school organisation proposals to part finance the investment.
- The LAs priorities for investment in the Capital Programme are also aligned to the condition, suitability and sufficiency of schools and relevant planning of school places strategies as detailed within the authority's Strategic Outline Programme (SOP).
- The LA are currently drafting an updated Learning Asset Management Plan 2019-2031 to cover medium to long term aims for the Education capital programme.
- In 2019/20 WG have provided £878k of Capital Maintenance Grant monies to enable the local authority to deliver priority capital maintenance projects on its school buildings. These projects have been agreed between Education, Property Services/Estates and Finance.
- Local Authority capital maintenance works in schools are required to be undertaken on a rolling programme.

- The formula funding allocation for schools includes specific monies for building repairs and maintenance and all schools set a budget for this. Schools are also provided with copies of completed condition surveys including details of required remedial works that the school is responsible for in order to plan works.
- The local authority provides schools with a 'Responsibility for School Buildings Repairs & Maintenance' guidebook annually which sets out the responsibilities that fall to the school, LA or VA governors respectively to further support schools to plan their own repairs and maintenance works.
- Statutory compliance testing and checks are managed by the LA on behalf of schools via an SLA with Property Services. Urgent and emergency responsive repairs are also reported to the LA through this SLA and the work is prioritised and dealt with according to the assigned priority
- The LA manages a mutual fund for non-capital repairs & maintenance on behalf of schools which allows schools to pool a proportion of their delegated repairs & maintenance budget to create economies of scale. This supports individual schools to manage urgent responsive work and costly maintenance.

Admissions

- The Admission Forum is an effective forum, chaired independently where all stakeholders discuss and seek consensus regarding all matters concerning the local authority's admission arrangements.
- The Forum meets bi-annually and includes representatives from the diocesan authority, the local VA schools, each of the various school sectors, neighbouring LA reps, and other appropriate professionals such as officers from the ALN department and the CLA team.
- The LA publish the admissions arrangements for the VA schools in Merthyr within the annual statutory publication 'Guide to Admissions for Parents'.
- The Admissions Forum is consulted by the LA with regards to its Admission Policy which is reviewed annually, any proposed changes to catchment areas and any protocols such as Managed Moves and Fair Access.
- Parental communication and support, mid-term admissions and nursery admission arrangements are all discussed and agreed with the Admissions Forum.
- The communication interface and access to understandable information has improved for parents/carers with increased use of web, social media, emails, texts and parent friendly leaflets.
- Drop in sessions were organised in Early Years settings to support the Nursery admission round for September 2018. The aim was to improve the transition links between early years' placements and nursery education places in school.
- Admissions have been via an online process for Reception and Secondary admissions since September 2018, however a significant number of parents/carers have experienced difficulties accessing the online Capita One system and this in addition to the anticipated issues securing online take up has resulted in approximately 36% of Reception applications and 33% of Secondary applications being made online for September 2019.
- Through strategic planning of school places, the authority has ensured sufficient space is available in local schools and no parent has made an appeal for admissions to statutory school place.
- Parental first preference is consistently met for 100% for Reception and Secondary school admission and processes are operated in accordance with statutory timescales
- The authority has effective arrangements for children who move into the area during the school year so that they can be accommodated without delay. All pupils not attending school or receiving other appropriate education have been offered a place within the recommended timescales.
- There are a significant number of mid-term admissions within the local authority; 270 in 2017/18 (50% from out of county) and 155 to date in 2018/19 (57% from out of county). 100% of mid-term admissions were within statutory timescales in 2017-18 and in 2018/19 this figure is 99%.

- The Managed Move protocol and Equality of Access protocol agreed by schools and diocesan authority is working effectively and helps to ensure managed moves are equitable and progressed within statutory timescales.

Key Priorities for Improvement

- Improve the quality leadership at all levels (particularly middle leaders), including governance through increased engagement through CSC Leadership Programmes.
- To improve levels of wellbeing for all pupils by developing a collective approach to prevent and minimise harm caused by Adverse Childhood Experiences.
- To improve arrangements for supporting behaviour needs in schools.
- To work with Children's Services to improve outcomes for CLA.
- Determine and implement sufficient nursery education arrangements for 3 and 4 year olds and reflect in published admission arrangements.

Evidence

- Scrutiny Report– National Categorisation of Schools, January 2019
- Scrutiny Committee Report – Inspection Area 2, October 2018
- Estyn Appendix and Background paper IA2.1, 2.2, 2.3
- School categorisation overview 2018-19
- LA Performance Review Reports
- LA Performance Review minutes
- Use of Powers overview
- Risk Management Conference minutes
- Governor training records
- Youth Service Strategy 17-20
- YSS Cabinet Information Report progress since 2015
- CHS Year 10 26.03.18
- CHS minutes 26th March
- Enhanced Support Minutes May 2018
- Scrutiny Report: Early Language Development, Nov 2017
- Families First Grant Annual Report 17.18
- CSA Template Merthyr Tydfil 2017 Final (2.2)
- Portfolio report flying Start 17-18
- Final Monitoring Tool update Jan 2018
- Destinations pre-release from CW Hub
- MIS Individual LEA Y11 2017
- Cabinet Report Play Sufficiency Assessment 2018
- 171024-youth-work-2016-17
- Awarding body assessment reports - SM
- YSS Cabinet – info report – progress since 2015
- NEET Prevention & Performance Report 2018
- NEETs Strategy Council Approved
- Participation Report 17/18
- Youth Service Strategy 2017-20

INSPECTION AREA 3 – LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT

3.1 Quality and effectiveness of leaders and managers

The quality and effectiveness of managers is **adequate and needs improvement** because although leadership in the local authority has been successful in making and sustaining improvements over the last four years standards have yet to be consistently good.

The clear vision and focus on key strategic priorities and initiatives helps ensure that services to schools contribute to high quality provision. Effective and efficient service delivery impacts well on standards and the quality of education and training for all children and young people. Partnership working within and beyond the council is well established and leads to effective services.

- All officers and elected members share a common vision, objectives and purpose as articulated by the corporate plan Focus on the Future.
- This vision permeates the Focus on Performance employee appraisal scheme and is shared with all staff in this way and through the department Learning Away Days.
- All priorities within the learning department, as well as work with internal and external partners and the projects to deliver the corporate wellbeing objectives, are all focused firmly on meeting the needs of all learners. The priorities are shared with and understood by local authority officers and schools and underpinned by the five ways of working.
- The council's governance structure is beginning a process for considering the implications of the 5 ways of working and the impact of strategic, policy and operational decisions on long term sustainability in terms of service improvement and contributing towards the wellbeing objectives.
- The vision of securing improved outcomes through a self-improving school system is clear and well-articulated..
- The Chief Officer Learning and the Education Senior Leadership Team lead effective Learning Away Days with all senior and middle managers from across the department and including key stakeholder services from other departments e.g. CLA, Sports Development, and Headteacher representatives.
- The chair of scrutiny and the portfolio lead for education work together to ensure a strong focus on raising standards for all learners and in providing effective services.
- Lead Officers and senior managers communicate high expectations for securing improvement and challenge positively to good effect. All staff have performance appraisals and one to one supervision sessions and all teams/team leaders are responsible for delivering business improvement plans to meet agreed priorities for improvement. Wherever possible strategic priorities permeate through the Business Improvement Plans and are incorporated within employees performance appraisal objectives.
- Staff wellbeing is managed through 1-1 supervision and the department has low level of staff sickness rates.
- The Corporate Plan sets out the key performance indicators for the Learning Department and performance against these targets are monitored throughout the year via updates to scrutiny and through the Annual Performance Report.
- Through reports to cabinet, council and scrutiny committees, elected members continue to have a good overview of all services across the local authority in order to compare and challenge services more effectively and make well-informed decisions. In addition, elected members hold managers to account for the services and outcomes that they are responsible for.

- The Scrutiny Committee continues to have an appropriate and well-planned programme of work that includes robust monitoring of the authority's priorities for improvement arising from the education service's self-evaluation arrangements. It has established an appropriate annual programme of reporting which includes, the Annual Performance Report, end of key stage performance, NEET figures, inspection outcomes, categorisation of schools. The committee is effective in holding the local authority to account and challenges the nature of some support services where there are concerns, for example, the task and finish group focussing on attendance and service level agreements with schools.
- Leaders and managers have developed and maintain effective working relationships with other services that contribute towards achieving the priority areas for education services. This includes Property Services, HR, Accountancy, Legal, CLA, Sports Development, Business Change, Performance & Scrutiny and others. Some of these services areas deliver Education Service Business Improvement Plans working towards priorities areas for education and wellbeing and others are leading on education work streams that have been agreed with Corporate Management Team.
- Officers and school members collaborate well and provide good leadership to the Schools Forum helping to deliver strategic priorities and plans for education services. The quality of professional relationships and distributed leadership across the group supports effective decision making in support of improvement priorities for both the local authority and schools.
- Departmental processes for identifying, reviewing and assessing risks facing schools are well established and involve collaboration between Challenge Advisors/Senior Challenge Advisors and service leads from across the Education services. This process has been delivered through half-termly School Review Group meetings (recently rebranded Team Around the School (TAS) meetings) and include and escalation process to the Learning Department's Risk Management meeting.
- Corporate processes for the establishment and review of risks are also well established and the Learning Department's half-termly Risk Management meetings with the Chief Executive and senior officers from Legal and Human Resources complement this. As a result issues and risks in schools are addressed swiftly.
- Leaders have reviewed and acted upon recommendations to strengthen the Council's EOTAS provision and have restructured the leadership and governance arrangements, registering the provision as a PRU in September 2018 that has led to improved leadership and teaching during the current academic year.
- Service managers have delivered sustained improved performance of support services delivered to schools since the fundamental review of SLA and non-statutory services in 2014 including the restructuring and reconfiguration of various services.
- A strong partnership between the authority and its regional consortium for school improvement, Central South Consortium, helps to provide a clear model of support and challenge for schools, which is proportionate to their level of need.
- The LA evaluates the impact of the CSCs school improvement work and manages the partnership arrangement and relationship through the termly performance meetings. This allows the authority to direct the consortium's education services to specific areas for improvement more efficiently, and to hold the consortium to account for the quality of its work more effectively.
- Improved partnership working in youth support services enables the authority to take a strategic approach when planning future services. A key driver of the new partnership arrangements is the establishment of the youth support services steering group. The authority works well in partnership with the voluntary sector through its partnership with the Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil and the providers' network. This has enabled an improved understanding of provision in this area and is giving lead workers better opportunities to meet the needs of young people. The authority has also worked very well in partnership with young people to develop programmes and to refine support processes that respond to current needs and issues.

- The department has a system that holds key data across a range of education service functions including additional learning needs, attendance, exclusions and school admissions. The sharing and use of data within education and the wider Learning department has improved. The authority is in a stronger position to monitor performance, identify trends and determine suitable priorities for improvement.
- The local authority commissions a wide range of services for pupils with ALN from a neighbouring authority, Health and from private providers which has led to a more rigorous and consistent approach to the provision of support and efficient use of resources.
- Greenfield Special School, on behalf of the authority, continues to provide a highly effective outreach service for schools and is continuing to lead on the implementation of the person-centred planning model, along with PBS training. This helps mainstream schools in preparing for the statutory reform of additional learning needs and to improve provision for pupils with ALN. Currently 23 out of 27 (85%) of schools have attended training on person-centred planning.
- Strong partnerships with schools, other local authorities and community groups underpin the development of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan. The WESP details proposals for developing a third WM primary school in response to the commitment of leaders to encourage further growth in demand for WM education places.
- The local authority's Band B SOP for 21st Century Schools demonstrates an integrated strategic approach at a local and national level and evidences the commitment of leaders to make increased investment of resources aligned to key strategic priorities and long-term planning.
- The Council has historically been proactive in taking difficult decisions with respect to school reorganisation and has continued to take positive steps towards effective school reorganisation school in recent years establishing a federated governing body across two VA schools, a merged primary and nursery across 2 sites prior to a single new build as part of 21st Century schools, an informal federation of neighbouring primary schools and is currently consulting on a proposed single 3-16 VA school in the place of the 4 existing VA schools.

3.2 Self Evaluation and Improvement Planning

Self-evaluation and improvement planning is **adequate and needs improvement**.

The current self-evaluation processes result in leaders, managers and elected members having an accurate picture and understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in this area and they routinely make good use of a range of rigorous monitoring activities. Performance data is consistently used to monitor progress and plan for improvement. There is a sustained focus on achieving progress against the authority's priorities and on ensuring an effective and efficient service delivery.

The time delay between good self-evaluation/improvement planning and improved service provision and outcomes is acknowledged, and so further evaluation of the impact of SER and improvement planning is required.

The revised corporate approach to self-evaluation currently being implemented will help to ensure that the authority continues to develop a good and improving understanding of strengths, weakness and priorities for improvement within all of its service areas. This consistency of process at the corporate level will help to ensure scrutiny and challenge of all authority services including Education is increasingly robust across the whole local authority to build upon the good work within Education services.

- Self-evaluation processes across the local authority's education services continue to be robust, transparent and based on reliable and comparative performance data. Information is used well to challenge performance, set ambitious targets, and to identify priorities for improvement that are used to inform service planning.

- Self-evaluation reports are discussed and debated in the Education Services Leadership Team (ESLT) meetings and Learning Away Days which includes middle and senior managers from across Education services, officers from other local authority departments and now also includes Head Teachers. The corporate performance officer link for education services also attends to provide corporate scrutiny, challenge and support.
- The corporate performance and challenge framework includes arrangements for reporting on key performance indicators and outcomes against the corporate wellbeing plan 'Focus on the Future' within the Annual Performance Report, as required by the Wellbeing and Future Generations Act, 2015.
- A range of performance reports are presented throughout the year to the Learning & LAESCYP (L&L) Scrutiny Committee for scrutiny and challenge as part of the annual Scrutiny work programme.
- There is a comprehensive evaluation and monitoring of data on standards and the quality of education, including consideration of trends and progress over time, reported to Cabinet, Council and L&L Scrutiny Committee.
- Scrutiny committee continues to play a key role in supporting and challenging the self-evaluation process, the judgements in the SER and the priorities for improvement.
- Scrutiny members also continue to hold to account the Central South Consortium (CSC), Education Services, schools and delivery against the corporate plan on a regular basis
- The range of senior officer and member scrutiny meetings that take place as part of the performance and challenge framework provide good opportunity for senior officers and members to effectively use performance indicators and management information to regularly monitor progress against improvement priorities, projects and performance objectives ensuring that remedial action is taken where appropriate.
- Schools contribute appropriately to the education service's self-evaluation through a valuable range of working groups and forums and Head Teachers have recently been added to the participants at Learning Away Days. They also continue to contribute effectively to reviews of relevant service level agreements.
- Evidence based, purposeful self-evaluation has continued to be embedded in partnership working with schools through the processes of national categorisation, Case Conferences, and School to school support.
- A representative of the Youth Forum now sit on all scrutiny committees and play an active role on challenging local authority officers. Views of the community expressed through the wellbeing and population needs assessments have informed projects and delivery plans for the wellbeing objectives identified within the Corporate Wellbeing Plan Focus on the Future.
- The process of improvement planning has been developed further in order to formally capture key priorities for improvement identified from the self-evaluation process within each service areas business improvement plan. Each business improvement plan sets out clearly the actions for improvement, with specified and realistic timescales and allocated officers responsible for delivery.
- The local authority makes good use of resources for education services and spending decisions relate well to strategic priorities for improvement. Additional resources have been allocated to address priority areas and improvement projects that have been identified through self-evaluation, business planning and SLA review processes.
- The local authority also proactively seeks and uses external grant funding, both revenue and capital, to address its own and schools' priorities.
- The corporate wellbeing plan Focus on the Future has clear links to the Public Service Board's (PSB) wellbeing plan and includes the Best Start wellbeing objective as the core corporate objective for Education Services. This is supported by the Chief Education Officers Best Start Strategy On A Page (SOAP) and monitored via regular performance reporting to scrutiny committees against the key performance indicators and the annual wellbeing projects.
- Each education service area has a service SOAP that aligns to the Best Start SOAP

- Performance management arrangements continue to be effective across education services. Staff are subject to annual performance appraisals, 6 monthly performance reviews and 4 to 6 weekly one to one supervision meetings. This framework supports staff and management to appropriately assess outcomes and their own performance.
- Self-evaluation, improvement planning and performance management arrangements are aligned and help to ensure that a golden thread linking priorities, action plans and performance objectives is in place which helps to deliver improvements against targeted outcomes.
- Each service business improvement plan is reflected at the sub-level as part of each team's business improvement planning and reflected in individual staff's annual performance objectives where appropriate. This ensures a golden thread of priorities to better support delivery of plans to address priorities.
- Evaluation and monitoring of progress against the recommendations from the Estyn monitoring inspection report of January 2016 is undertaken and actions are planned to ensure improvements made are sustained.
- Recommendations from Estyn thematic reviews are responded to and inform planning as well as other reports from inspectorates and regulators being reviewed and evaluated to assess implications for planning. E.g. reports in relation to the CSC.
- The local authority is proactive in responding to complaints about its services and complainants are supported well by both local authority officers through the Governor Support Services and by external agencies e.g. SNAP Cymru.
- Good practice and guidance on the management of complaints is shared with governors regularly and training provided to schools where necessary.
- The Schools Forum's annual evaluation of local authority SLAs is used very well by service managers to improve services in response to constructive feedback from schools and where appropriate complaints as detailed in the evaluation returns.

3.3 Professional learning

The current judgment for professional learning is **adequate and needs improvement**.

Staff keep up to date with knowledge about their areas of responsibility through attendance and participation at conferences, Welsh Government and local workshops.

However, there is not a systematic mechanism established to ensure the dissemination of key messages from professional learning opportunities across the department. Also, further structured learning and training opportunities are required, particularly for those at middle management level to support strategic development and succession planning.

- The Chief Officer (Learning) and Head of School Planning and Improvement participated in the Association of Directors of Education in Wales (ADEW) Welsh Future Education Leaders' Programme during 2017-18. This led to strategic development support and challenge from other senior officers across Wales when considering service challenges
- Service leads, Senior Managers/Heads of Service and the Chief Officer are active members of key strategic ADEW groups, WG strategy groups and regional consortia and CwmTaf sub-groups where established. This enables services to be up-to-date with professional knowledge, Welsh Government (WG) strategic policy development and expectations, and allows for the sharing of best practice, problem solving and the opportunity to influence decision making at the highest level.

- The Chief Officer (Learning) and Heads of Services within the Learning Department were part of the corporate Managers Academy during 2017/18. This programme led to changes within the management of strategic activities across the Council and enhanced development of strategic planning and engagement with middle and senior management in the Learning Department through the Learning Away Days.
- The Chief Officer (Learning) and Head of Community Wellbeing are members of the Strategic Partnership Board (SPB) – the board which leads on and challenges delivery of the CwmTaf Wellbeing plan. The Inclusion Manager is a member of the CwmTaf steering groups in respect of safeguarding and mental health.
- Through performance management appraisals and 1-1's staff are encouraged to identify their own personal and professional learning needs and these are supported as far as possible.
- Managers also use supervision and appraisals as opportunities to identify professional learning and training requirements as a way to support CPD and succession planning
- Learning Department Away Days allow for service leads from across the local authority that have an involvement with schools to evaluate how the work they do has an impact on outcomes for children and young people. Officers from outside the Learning Department include – CLA Education Coordinator, and the Sports Development Officer. These days also allow for joint learning opportunities e.g. Additional Learning Needs Education & Transformation Act (ALNET), Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) Awareness, contributions to self-evaluation of Education Services and strategic planning and development.
- Staff from across the department, understand and discharge their roles and responsibilities well, and collaborate effectively within Education services and across the local authority in driving forward strategic priorities and plans for education services.
- Corporate HR provides learning and training opportunities for all staff across the Council to support organisational and staff development. Some learning opportunities are mandatory e.g. Domestic Violence and others are for CPD e.g. ILM courses and accredited qualifications.

3.4 Safeguarding

Safeguarding is **good** because the local authority meets safeguarding regulations and ensures that all school staff remain in compliance with training requirements.

- Safeguarding arrangements and governance are robust and are in compliance with Welsh Government guidance.
- All schools engage in the annual Safeguarding Self-evaluation process.
- The Child Safeguarding Policy and self-evaluation audit tool have been updated in light of the Prevent Duty and statutory requirements around Female Genital Mutilation and Domestic Violence. This self-evaluation template aims enables schools to monitor and evaluate their own safeguarding arrangements.
- All school governing bodies have adopted the Cwm Taf exemplar Child Safeguarding Policy for 2017/18 and are currently in the process of doing so for that of 2018/19.
- Advice and guidance is provided on the content of risk assessments which continue to be quality assured.
- The local authority has a Safeguarding Officer who is the Local Authority's Designated Officer for Safeguarding and the Inclusion Manager is the Education Lead Officer.
- All schools have a Designated Senior Person (DSP) with responsibility for safeguarding. All school staff and pupils are made aware of whom they are.

- The Local Safeguarding Board has recently endorsed their policy on 'Responding to Safeguarding Concerns about Individuals Whose Work Brings them into Contact with Children and Adults at Risk'. The Inclusion department have produced guidance specifically for schools on the process to follow when an allegation is made against a member of staff, in order to ensure that staff feel supported during this process. Additional information has been produced to enable schools to support staff in the aftermath.
- The Local Authority has a clear Safer Recruitment process and routinely monitors compliance.
- The Safeguarding Forum for schools continues to regularly meet and share current safeguarding policies, processes and good practice. Outside agencies are invited to these meetings i.e. the Police.
- In the Autumn Term of 2018/19 a joint Safeguarding training day was held with RCT for Headteachers and Senior Managers. This covered such topics as modern slavery, County Lines and FGM.
- The local authority disseminates up to date information, policies and protocols in respect of Safeguarding to colleagues in the department and to schools.
- The local authority provides information and resources in relation to Anti-bullying and Safeguarding week so that schools can partake in these activities. The aim of which is to ensure that children and young people can make informed choices.
- Education has representation on the Cwm Taf Safeguarding Board and its Sub groups to ensure that it is aware of new policies and protocols and therefore best placed to share good practice.
- The local authority has established a Corporate Safeguarding Group to develop relationships between all departments to ensure safeguarding and the promotion of welfare of both children and adults. This group monitors performance in relation to Safeguarding across the Council.
- Safeguarding Training has been delivered to Governors, peripatetic staff, and colleagues working in Catering and Transport to ensure that all those working with children or vulnerable adults are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities.
- Safeguarding training has been delivered to local authority and school staff; to which all schools have engaged.
- Safeguarding training modules produced by Welsh Government have been shared with schools and local authority colleagues

3.5 Use of Resources

The judgement for resources management is **good** because staffing, accommodation and financial resources, both revenue and capital, are managed and deployed effectively to support learning and improvement. The authority makes good use of the funding it receives and spending decisions continue to relate well to strategic priorities for improvement and benefits for schools and their learners. Partnership activity delivers good value for money because it contributes to improved provision outcomes for learners in aspects which the authority and its schools alone could not provide.

- Additional resources, both one-off and recurring, have been allocated to Education services budgets to address priority areas and improvement projects that have been identified through self-evaluation, business planning and SLA review processes
- Examples of this are; VI SLA and School Nurse SLA resources for Greenfield Special school, additional temporary staff resources to support the transitioning to the ALNET Bill and transitioning to online admissions, additional facility time for teacher union reps, commissioning of a nursery sufficiency review, and temporary resources to manage data quality in Capita One pending a permanent solution.
- Additional resources have been secured from the local authority's budget for 2018/19 and beyond to support the outcomes of the ALN review. These resources have enabled enhanced specialist provisions to be set up for a two year transitional period September 2018 to August 2020.

- The additional resources secured have been largely offset by identifying efficiency savings from reductions in Enhanced Provision support and Out of County placements arising from placing pupils in the new and more appropriate specialist provision within the county borough.
- The allocation of the local authority's capital and corporate maintenance budgets reflect education priorities including capital works to support the new specialist provisions, additional accommodation space for the special school due to increasing pupil numbers, and priority maintenance work including significant roof repair/replacements and lighting and insulation works.
- The 21st Century Schools programme Bands A and B reflect significant match funded resource investment by the local authority on priority education improvement projects that address; poor/bad condition buildings no longer suitable for teaching and learning, schools with significant surplus places and enable the co-location of early years/nursery education on the same sites as both Primary and Secondary schools, including proposed 3-16 schools / sites where possible.
- The local authority's wider Education asset management plan resourced through WG capital grants and CIL monies enables the delivery of other strategic priorities and projects such as significantly increasing Primary school places in the WM sector, increasing the capacity of primary schools at risk of oversubscription, increasing the number of nursery education places in both maintained and non-maintained settings and further increasing the co-location of early years childcare settings within school premises in support of the 30 hr childcare offer.
- The identification of efficiency savings within Education services has been led for a number of years by a strategic approach to remodelling services based on providing statutory and essential functions for better economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- All services have been reviewed since 2014 to ensure that the core resources are spent on delivering statutory and / or essential functions. This is an ongoing consideration in the annual budget setting process.
- Also, in order to maximise the effective and efficient use of central staff resources a number of reviews of the management structure has led to realignment of roles / responsibilities to maximise utility of existing staff, enhancing existing SLA arrangements where possible and as such there has been a significant reduction to the number of management positions.
- The LAs Strategic Education Projects (SEPs) budget (£42k in 18/19) and Annex B CSC budget (£8k in 18/19) are available resources to support school improvement strategies within schools and the LA and both budgets are allocated based on agreed emerging school improvement priorities.
- The ALNET Grant of £818k for 2018/19 has been allocated across the region for LAs to lead on one or more of the eight priorities. MTCBC is leading on priorities 5 and 8 (circa £168k in total). Merthyr has been directly allocated £65k for delivery against various priorities, the largest allocation out of all central south regional LAs. However, all LAs will benefit from the work that is being delivered from this grant.
- The local Schools Forum is used very effectively to review many aspects of schools funding on an annual basis. E.g. schools funding is reviewed annually to target where efficiency savings can be delivered whilst having the least impact on the core business of teaching and learning. Schools Forum recommendations are risk assessed and consulted on with all schools.
- No schools ended 2018/19 in a financial deficit position.
- The local authority evaluates the financial risk of schools and categorises them annually Red, Amber, Yellow, Green in order to determine the appropriate level of monitoring, challenge and support required by the school in order to help support the school to provide economy, efficiency and effectiveness in their financial management of the school.
- The number of schools at medium or high financial risk in 2018/19 has increased year on year from six to eight which is an increase from 21% to 30%. These risks are based on the indicative financial pressure schools are expecting to face over their medium term financial plan. This approach enables early intervention to challenge and support schools with financial planning.

- Schools that require a reconfiguration of their workforce due to financial pressures are supported with a robust business plan process that enables the local authority to scrutinise and challenge the sustainability of the proposals, both financial and service delivery, prior to committing Council resources to finance the necessary VR/VER costs.
- The LA's formula allocation funds schools in recognition of pupil needs and the contexts of schools providing specific allocations for SEN, SpLD, EAL and deprivation as measured by WIMD. Also, in recognition of the inefficiency caused by surplus places, a 10% threshold is applied to surplus places before the funding a school receives for premises is proportionately reduced by the % surplus places.
- The EIG is allocated via the Central South Consortium through a regional model which ensures a high level of EIG funds are delegated to schools.
- All schools use school spending plans for WG grants; EIG, PDG etc. which are signed off by CAs. Schools are supported to reconcile these plans to their annual budget and to share this detail in their finance committees so that use of the grant can be effectively monitored and challenged by governors.
- Schools are advised to review grant spending plans to ensure the grants are being used for additionality and not to subsidise core provision.
- The local authority has worked in partnership with schools and clusters of schools to proactively seek and use external grant funding to address its own and schools' priorities.
- These grant funding opportunities include funding for supply teachers to be utilised across clusters of schools, funding for additional classroom teachers to increase the number of foundation phase classes in schools with large class sizes, and to build additional classrooms where appropriate. Funding for Small and Rural schools has also been secured to support innovative working within small schools.
- Capital grant funding has been secured to deliver strategic priorities related to the WESP through the Welsh Medium Capital Grant and through the Early Years Capital bid in support of the roll out of the 30 hrs childcare offer.
- The local authority has secured full approval from WG for the £7.1 million new build Ysgol Y Graig project as part of the 21st Century Schools Band A programme and includes a proposal to co-locate a pre-school within the new build as part of the Early Years Capital grant award.
- To date, the use of Capita One has been successful in allowing the LA to access better quality, timely performance data for schools that has enabled targeted monitoring, challenge, support and intervention to bring about improvements in school and pupil outcomes.
- However, further investment is required to adequately resource a central Capita One team that will be able to improve the availability and use of high quality and timely management information across all education services.
- A recent review of Capita One use in Merthyr by RCT acknowledged the good work and progress that the local authority has made with Capita One but identified the need to resolve technical maintenance reliability and to sufficiently resource a dedicated Capita One team as critical to further the development and use of management information in support of improving the outcomes of children and young people.
- The local authority also has a number of partnership arrangements in place with RCT and Cwm Taf Health for the delivery of ALN services. These arrangements such as; Education Psychology Joint Service, Visual Impairment SLA, Speech and Language Therapy SLA, Special School Nurse SLA enable the delivery of essential and statutory services to pupils that would be non-viable otherwise.
- These services have a positive impact on pupils and enable the local authority to meet their needs more effectively. Each of these SLAs costs are reviewed in detail between the partners and challenged for greater quality in terms of outcomes, cost effectiveness and efficiency.
- In order to avoid possible duplication of delivery and maximise effective service provision the LA has jointly contracted for the School Counselling Service along with the Families First Counselling Service from April 2018.

- The LA is working in partnership with Greenfield Special School on a transitional basis to deliver an outreach service to mainstream schools in order to support pupils with behavioural needs and improve the capacity within schools to meet those needs.
- The local authority is working in partnership with other LAs across the region to develop readiness for the ALNET. This is focused on ensuring school and LA readiness and providing transitioning support for the bill implementation and roll out. The aim of the partnership working is to optimise the synergies and efficiencies from a consistent approach across the region to support effective delivery of ALN reform for the benefit of pupils' wellbeing and overall outcomes.
- The local authority undertakes its own value for money analysis comparing its costs and outcomes for pupils and youth services with those of other authorities and can demonstrate whether children and young people achieve good outcomes in relation to costs of the services that it provides.
- The analysis provides the authority with a good understanding of the value-for-money provided by schools and youth services
- Resources are used effectively and efficiently by CSC, through the categorisation process, to provide support for schools in inverse proportion to success. CSC targeted support to underperforming schools has generally led to improvement in measurable outcomes, although performance in pupil outcomes across key stages has fallen overall in 2018.
- The CSC review its own performance and VfM provided to each LA through the publication of its annual Value for Money Report and this is subject to local authority scrutiny through Learning Scrutiny committee.
- Provision of support services to schools via SLAs are evaluated annually by schools at the request of the Schools Forum. The annual evaluation considers impact, quality, cost-effectiveness and value for money and requires schools to judge services either Excellent, Good, Adequate or Unsatisfactory.
- All SLAs were subject to a fundamental review for the three year cycle 2015-18 by the Schools Forum in partnership with the LA and improvements were made in terms of cost reductions, removal of non-essential and duplicate functions/SLAs, and a clearer focus in terms of service objectives.
- In the annual evaluation of SLAs during the Autumn Term 2018 all SLAs were rated as at least Good for the first time since SLAs have been reviewed and evaluated following the 2012 inspection.
- SLAs were also assessed for the current 2018-21 cycle by the Schools Forum and those causing most concern to schools were reviewed by a task and finish group of Headteachers and service managers resulting in the resolution of emerging issues and further improvements being made to the respective SLAs.

Key Areas for Improvement

- Review and refresh the core learning strategy Raising Standards
- Continue to develop and embed other stakeholders' involvement in contributing towards the local authority's self-evaluation processes and identification of priority areas for improvement.
- Increase structured learning and training opportunities for all staff across Education services particularly those at middle management level and above to support strategic development and succession planning.
- Secure financial resources for and implement a fit for purpose hosting and technical maintenance solution for Capita One during 2019/20. Also, secure appropriate staffing resources to continue the development and effective use of Capita One across the whole of educations services within the local authority and to enable the delivery of a Capita One Development Plan.

Evidence

- Scrutiny Committee Report – Inspection Area 3 Leadership and Management, November 2018
- Background paper IA 3.1, November 2018
- Headteacher Forum agendas
- Chairs of Governors Forum agendas

- Scrutiny reporting schedule 2018-2019
- Cabinet reporting schedule 2018-2019
- Council reporting schedule 2018-2019
- Risk Management Conference minutes (see IA2.1)
- LA Performance Meeting minutes (see IA 2.1)
- Early Years Strategy Group Minutes
- NEET Steering Group minutes
- Play Sufficiency Steering Group minutes
- YSS meeting minutes
- YSS Steering Group TOR
- YSS Strategic Plan
- Scrutiny Committee Report – Inspection Area 3 Leadership and Management, November 2018
- Scrutiny Report – National Categorisation of Schools, January 2019 (see IA 2.1)
- Background paper IA 3.2, November 2018
- ESLT minutes
- Headteacher Forum agenda (see 3.1)
- Chair of Governors Forum agenda (see 3.1)
- School Forum agenda
- Annual Performance Report 2017-2018
- L&L scrutiny work programme
- Risk Management Committee minutes
- CMT minutes
- Business Improvement Plans 2018-2019
- Best Start SOAP
- Raising Standards SOAP
- Team Business Improvement Plans
- Estyn Thematic Review action plan
- Complaints Guidance for Governing Bodies
- SLA Annual Evaluation returns
- Scrutiny Committee Report – Inspection Area 3 Leadership and Management, November 2018
- Background paper IA3.3, November 2018
- All Wales Advisory meeting
- FPP Fine Motor Skills powerpoint
- WG EYAT meeting, May 2017
- Scrutiny Committee Report – Inspection Area 3 Leadership and Management, November 2018
- Background paper IA3.3, November 2018
- All Wales Advisory meeting
- FPP Fine Motor Skills powerpoint
- WG EYAT meeting, May 2017
- Scrutiny Committee Report – Inspection Area 3 Leadership and Management, November 2018
- Background paper IA3.4, November 2018
- Scrutiny Committee Report – Inspection Area 3 Leadership and Management, November 2018
- Background paper IA3.5, November 2018
- Budget Papers 2018/19 and 2019/20
- School Nurse SLA
- Facility time Cabinet Report
- Bid for temporary staff resources to support ALNET bill and supporting online Admissions
- Nursery Sufficiency brief
- L&L Scrutiny Budget Report 2019/20 (LRB and PRU growth)
- Capital Budget 2018/19 onwards / Corporate Mtce Budget 2018/19
- Band B SOP August 2017 / Revised SOP February 2019
- Bands A / b Match funding matrix
- WM Capital Grant Bid

- Reducing Infant Class sizes bid
- Budget efficiency options papers 2015/16 onwards
- Structures 2014/15 and current structure 2018/19
- ESP Budget 2018/19 & Annex B 2018/19
- ALN Innovation Grant 18/19
- Schools Forum Agendas/Minutes
- Basic Skills case study 2015
- Schools Forum minutes
- Schools Balances Cabinet Report 2017-2019
- Schools Financial Training presentation
- Schools Financial Monitoring, Scrutiny and Intervention Policy
- Bedlinog PLD 2018-19
- Various school VER Business cases
- Section 52 Formula Funding Statement
- Pupil led review 2014-2016 Schools Forum report
- Social Needs Cabinet report
- Schools Forum minutes/papers
- EIG Delegation papers 2018-19
- Finance committee minutes
- Schools Financial monitoring meetings Minutes
- Supply cluster grant bid & approvals
- Reducing infant class sizes grant bid & approvals
- Small & Rural schools bid & approvals
- WM Capital Grant bid & approvals
- Early Years Capital bid & approvals
- Band A YYG OBC & Approval letter/email
- Risk management minutes
- Capita One Cabinet report re 5 year contract
- Capita One Review - Report
- Ed Psych SLA 2017-2020
- Cwm Taf SALT SLA 2018-2021
- VI SLA 2018-19
- Minutes of meetings/emails re meetings
- Exchange Counselling SLA 2018-19
- LRB Transitional budget 2018-2020.
- Case study re outreach work??
- ALNET Bill readiness updates to L&L scrutiny
- VFM Update to L&L scrutiny Oct 2018
- Performance meeting minutes 2017/18 & 2018/19
- Categorisation process and allocation of support 2018/19
- See 2.1
- CSC VfM Report to L&L Scrutiny March 2018
- SLA Annual Evaluations – Schools Forum papers/minutes
- Schools Forum minutes / SLA Documents 2015-18
- Schools Forum papers/minutes
- Schools Forum minutes