Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council

Self-Evaluation Report

Question 3: Leadership and Management

LEARNING

SUMMARY STATEMENT

Question 3:	Leadership and Management

3.1	How effective is leadership of the service?	<Adequate>
3.2	How effective is people management in the service?	<Adequate>
3.3	How effective is resource management in the service?	<Good>
3.4	Does the service set the right priorities?	<Adequate>
3.5	How well does the service engage with feedback from service users and address issues this identifies?	<Good>
3.6	How does the service fulfil its' statutory responsibility to safeguarding?	<Good>

REMEMBER:

When completing your form, please try to be evaluative rather than descriptive and focus on the impact and outcomes for people and the environment. In your evaluation identify what you consider to be strengths and areas for improvement and be brief, referencing the supporting evidence. Responses should consider the requirement to demonstrate the five ways of working; (e.g.) capture the requirements and contributions of collaborative working arrangements etc.

You will note Questions 3.1 and 3.4 contain some of the same prompts. Completers are asked to review these whilst considering the specific focus on the question (e.g.) the prompt 'joint outcomes with other services' should be looked at through the lens of the effectiveness of leadership when responding to 3.1; whilst the same prompt should be reflected upon in relationship to setting the right priorities in 3.4.

Governance (for Performance & Scrutiny use only)	
	Date:
Form completed and received:	DD/MM/YYYY
Internal challenge - session:	DD/MM/YYYY
Corporate Management Team session:	DD/MM/YYYY
Reviewed at Scrutiny:	25/11/2019

Question 3.1: How effective is leadership of the service?

JUDGEMENT   < Adequate >

EVALUATION: When answering the question, consider the following:

- How the service will look in 5 years' time
- Head of service and senior managers' personal objectives linked to service outcomes
- Successful delivery of personal objectives
- Elected Members influence on the work of the service
- Members and senior managers provide a clear direction and culture of open communication, continuous learning and accountability
- Contribution to existing strategic partnership plans
- Joint outcomes with other services
- Existing regional collaborations
- Partnership with the private or third sectors
- Partnership with public agencies

Current Position:

The effectiveness of leaders is **adequate** because although strengths outweigh weaknesses there are important areas that require improvement.

There is a clear focus on strategic priorities for improvement and delivering plans to address these in order to bring about improvements in outcomes. There is a golden thread aligning strategic priorities, business improvement planning and the performance management framework. Elected members have good engagement with the service through scrutiny and governance frameworks and use these to help shape the service priorities and to challenge the service for delivery against these priorities.

Senior officers take lead roles in regional partnership working, contribute to strategic partnership plans and are effective when working in collaborative groups across the local authority services including partnership working with schools. Partnership working within and beyond the council is well established and leads to more effective services, although the increased use of school leaders to support school to school working is required to help deliver improvements in pupil outcomes through better leadership and teaching and learning practices.

The overall strategic direction of the service over the medium to long-term, the strategic approach to raising standards in schools and to digital learning are also important areas for improvement. As is clear communication regarding these strategic approaches to services so that staff have a clear sense of the direction of travel. Increased opportunities for professional learning and for formalising the sharing of learning are also important areas to be addressed.

Good Practice:

- 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.
- The vision of securing improved outcomes through a self-improving school system is clear and well-articulated.
- The Chair of Scrutiny and the Portfolio Lead for Learning work together to ensure a strong focus on raising standards for all learners and in providing effective services.
- 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 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 and Scrutiny also continues to hold to account the Central South Consortium (CSC), Education Services, schools and delivery against the corporate plan Focus on the Future.
- Focus on the Future 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.
- 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. The committee is effective in holding the local authority to account and challenges where there are concerns.
- 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.
- The Chief Officer for 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.
- These 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, and they 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.
- Lead officers and senior managers communicate high expectations for securing improvement and challenge positively to good effect.
- 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.
- Staff keep up to date with knowledge about their areas of responsibility through attendance and participation at conferences, Welsh Government and local workshops.
- 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.

- 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 department and enhanced engagement around strategic planning 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.

- Managers use supervision and appraisals as opportunities to identify professional learning and training requirements for themselves and staff they line manage as a way to support CPD and succession planning.

- Corporate HR also provide 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.

- 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, IT, 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.

- Chief Officer and Head of School Planning & Improvement are collaborating with Head of IT and service leads to develop the Hwb Infrastructure Programme, ensuring it is fit for purpose and meets the needs of schools for the 21st Century in partnership with the Schools Digital Strategy Group which includes representatives from the CSC region. This partnership working is also seeking to ensure the programme is sustainable, in collaboration with the Chief Finance Officer and the Schools Forum.

- 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.

- 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 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 including co-location of early years provision and Welsh Medium place. The strategic programme 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.
- 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, and has recently overseen a second federation involving neighbouring schools in the south of the county borough and approved proposals to form a 3-16 VA school on a single site in the place of the four existing VA schools.

QUESTION 3: LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT

Question 3.1: How effective is leadership of the service?

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

Areas for Development:

In light of the evidence given above, identify areas that the service would like to develop in order to do better.

- Ensure that key messages from professional learning opportunities are shared with colleagues within and across departments.
- Maintain a directory of training and structured professional learning opportunities undertaken by staff

and evaluate the impact that professional learning activities have on improving the quality of outcomes and education services.

- To develop a more robust sharing of information at Team Around School (TAS) meetings.
- Improve the effectiveness of multi-agency collaboration through the Public Service Board in identifying and unblocking barriers to improvement, holding statutory partnerships to account and in monitoring the impact its work has on improving service delivery across organisations.
- Develop a Schools' Digital Strategy in partnership with Schools ICT service lead, CSC links, representative headteachers and school IT leads. Liaise with CSC Directors to ensure consistent development of digital strategy across the region.

Priorities for Improvement:

These are the priority areas that need immediate improvement in order to have an impact on outcomes. Consider the judgements- this should be about moving from unsatisfactory to adequate, or from adequate to good.

- Review and refresh the core learning strategy Raising Standards ensuring aligned to relevant national, regional and local strategies, involving relevant stakeholders and communicating clearly to all staff.
- Increase the involvement of school leaders in school to school working in order to share best practice in teaching, learning and leadership and help deliver improvements in pupil outcomes
- Review the strategic approach to Learning Department services and agree restructure to ensure delivery on priorities over the medium to long-term in a cohesive, collaborative and sustainable way. Timely and clear communication of this strategy to staff and other stakeholders is required.
- 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.

Question 3.2: How effective is people management in the service?

JUDGEMENT   < Adequate >

EVALUATION: When answering the question, consider the following:

- Sickness absence management
- Performance appraisals
- Management of poor performance
- Staff perception of management
- Motivation of staff
- Service resilience and over-reliance on key officers

Current Position:

People management is adequate because although there are strong features which outweigh weaknesses, there are some important aspects requiring improvement.

The performance management framework is well established and performance and wellbeing are well managed with low incidences of sickness absence.

Long-term uncertainty over the services future due to regional collaboration discussions, historic service contraction and loss of senior posts had previously affected morale and motivation but this has begun to be addressed and staff are increasingly engaged and motivated through the Learning Away Days and because service contraction has slowed due to issues of resilience arising which has brought a period of stability.

There is an over reliance on key officers and single points of dependency and this needs to be better understood in order to optimise existing resources and ensure any planned service restructure delivers more capacity in priority areas.

Good Practice:

- 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.
- The performance management framework supports staff and management to appropriately assess outcomes and their own performance. The 1-1 supervision helps enable staff address performance management concerns or issues before these escalate into formal processes.
- Staff wellbeing is managed through 1-1 supervision and the department has a low level of staff sickness rates.
- There are currently no issues of staff being managed through the capability or disciplinary policies for reasons of poor performance.
- Staff motivation has improved over the last 12 months as there has been more stability in these service at all levels.
- 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.
- The Learning Away Days have helped improve the motivation, morale and sense of shared responsibility for service delivery across the department. This needs to be embedded across all teams.
- Team meetings enable departmental and corporate messages to be consistently shared with staff and help with lines of communication and there is regular feedback from staff to senior officers via team leaders.
- There are a number of SPODs across multiple areas within the service but no record of this over reliance on officers is maintained to help inform strategic planning of human resources.
- When key staff are unavailable due to ill health or any other reason, other staff are usually very willing to step in and support, share knowledge and help deliver expected outcomes wherever possible.
- This team ethic of staff to help out in areas outside of their direct role in support of the service, the school and the young people of Merthyr is a very good feature of the department's staff.

Evidence:

QUESTION 3: LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT

Question 3.2: How effective is people management in the service?

Areas for Development:

In light of the evidence given above, identify areas that the service would like to develop in order to do better.

Uncertainty over the strategic direction of the Learning Department and whether services will be delivered on a regional footprint, in collaboration with other LAs and/or via a merger with other LAs is a cause for concern amongst staff in the department and has previously affected motivation and morale.

There are a number of SPODs across multiple areas within the service but no record of this over reliance on officers is maintained to help inform strategic planning of human resources. A record of these SPODs will help the service to plan service reconfiguration and to increase resilience more strategically.

Priorities for Improvement:

These are the priority areas that need immediate improvement in order to have an *impact on outcomes*. Consider the judgements - this should be about moving from unsatisfactory to adequate, or from adequate to good.

Timely and open communication of the strategic plans for the overall service once developed will be very important.

QUESTION 3: LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT

Question 3.3: How effective is resource management in the service?

JUDGEMENT   < Good >

EVALUATION: When answering the question, consider the following:

- Value for money
- Budget management
- Delivery of planned efficiency savings
- Aligning resources to deliver service and corporate outcomes

Current Position:

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 for the benefit of 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.

Good Practice:

- 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.
- 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 LAs 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.

Evidence:

QUESTION 3: LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT

Question 3.3: How effective is resource management in the service?

Areas for Development:

In light of the evidence given above, identify areas that the service would like to develop in order to do better.

1. Continue to receive corporate assessments of VFM comparative performance across Wales for LA performance data for schools, pupils and CYP.
2. Relaunch financial management training to schools categorised as Red or Amber in order to facilitate wider improvements in the financial stewardship of governing bodi

Priorities for Improvement:

These are the priority areas that need immediate improvement in order to have an ***impact on outcomes***. Consider the judgements - this should be about moving from unsatisfactory to adequate, or from adequate to good.

1. Complete the formula funding review and implement recommendations in a timely manner to ensure the formula is fair and equitable, needs based/efficient, transparent, and as simple as possible.

2. Carbon management projects in schools need to be taken forward in collaboration with Property Services to reduce the Carbon Footprint in schools and improve energy efficiency and sustainability.

QUESTION 3: LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT

Question 3.4: Does the service set the right priorities?

JUDGEMENT   < Adequate >

EVALUATION: When answering the question, consider the following:

- how the service understand the needs of the community
- how the service address the needs of the community (support for service improvement)
- how well the service aligns its activities to the councils wellbeing objectives
- Contribution to existing strategic partnership plans
- Joint outcomes with other services
- Existing regional collaborations
- Partnership with the private or third sectors
- Partnership with public agencies

Current Position:

The service currently sets appropriate priorities based on a robust self-evaluation process that is well embedded within the department and through governance frameworks such as Scrutiny Committee. However there are important areas that require improvement in order for priority setting and improvement planning to ultimately lead to improved outcomes in schools and therefore the service is adequate currently in this area.

The current self-evaluation processes result in leaders, managers and elected members having an accurate picture and understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the service 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 robust.

This will ultimately support the service to ensure it is setting the right priorities, some of which will inform corporate priorities, and that the challenge of delivering against these priorities successfully is viewed as a shared endeavour.

Good Practice:

- 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.
- The sharing and use of data within education and the wider Learning department has improved significantly following the implementation of Capita One in 2013-14 including across schools performance, attendance, exclusions, admissions, ALN, NEETS, Early Years and Youth Services. The authority is in a stronger position to monitor performance, identify trends and determine suitable priorities for improvement through appropriate data analysis. However, resource capacity to develop the current use any further is very limited.
- 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 Head Teachers. The corporate performance officer link for education services also attends to provide corporate scrutiny, challenge and support.
- The priorities are shared with and understood by local authority officers and schools, underpinned by the five ways of working and linked to the corporate wellbeing plan.
- 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 representative of the Youth Forum now sits on all Scrutiny committees and plays 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 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
- Evaluation and monitoring of progress against the recommendations from the Estyn monitoring inspection report of January 2016 is undertaken periodically and where appropriate actions are planned to sustain improvements.
- 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.
- 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 Team Around the School (TAS) meetings and include an 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 2018/19 academic year.
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QUESTION 3: LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT

Question 3.4: Does the service set the right priorities?

Evidence:

Areas for Development:

In light of the evidence given above, identify areas that the service would like to develop in order to do better.

Priorities for Improvement:

These are the priority areas that need immediate improvement in order to have an ***impact on outcomes***. Consider the judgements - this should be about moving from unsatisfactory to adequate, or from adequate to good.

- Secure appropriate staffing resources to enable the delivery of a Capita One Development Plan which will help to ensure data is used more effectively across the Learning department to inform service priorities for improvement.

- Estyn recommendations from 2012 and the Post Inspection Action Plan successfully delivered in 2016 should be reviewed to evaluate the local authority's current position against these areas and identify any priorities for improvement that emerge to inform Council and service priorities.

Question 3.5: How well does the service engage with feedback from stakeholders and address issues they identify?

JUDGEMENT   < Good >

EVALUATION: When answering the question, consider the following:

- the quality and frequency of service contact with all relevant stakeholders
- Responses to engagement activity (e.g. customer surveys, focus groups, pubic events etc.)

Current Position:

The service engagement with stakeholders to address issues identified and the response to feedback received is currently Good. The service engages regularly with stakeholders such as schools, pupils, governors, young people and partner organisations and feedback is sought on service delivery, quality and priorities for improvement that impacts those service users and stakeholders directly.

An area of improvement is to formalise the process where feedback is used to help shape service priorities and service planning so that this can be evidenced and to share this information with stakeholders so they are aware of the influence their feedback and engagement has had.

Good Practice:

- 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.
- The Schools Forum's annual evaluation of local authority SLAs is participated in by 100% of schools and 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
- Since 2018 all services have received an average Grade of at least Good from schools. Services that were previously adequate have responded to feedback and improved, and those that show year on year fall in scores are prioritised for close scrutiny by the Schools Forum.
- Annual changes to scheme of delegation / schools formula funding receive high levels of engagement from schools. This feedback is always reported to Cabinet to inform their decision making.
- 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.
- Schools provide feedback through Headteacher and other forums and this information informs service discussions at ESLT and where appropriate strategic developments for service delivery including the establishment of working groups to support changes to existing practices e.g. enhanced support review.
- 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 local authority is proactive in responding to complaints about its services and complainants are supported well by both local authority officers though 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.
- Pupil voice is strong across the LA. All schools actively seek pupil voice and have Student Councils. Some schools also have Eco and /or Attendance Committees. The remit of these groups vary, but are a vehicle to better understand the needs of the pupil by empowering them to take ownership of projects to ensure improvements.
- Pupil voice was been actively sought as part of the Council's current public consultation on Post 16 Transport options.
- 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.
- In 2018/19 the second Student conference event focusing on the Future Generation and Wellbeing Act was held. The aim of this event was for the young people to learn how the Future Generation and Wellbeing Act will impact on them and for their voice/opinions to be heard with regards to the new ways of working and for them to understand how they can influence planning. As a result of these meetings there has been improved communication between the PSB and the future generation of MTCBC.
- Good progress has been made involving young people and families in self-evaluation of services provided and how they could be improved and further improvements in this area have been identified as a priority to deliver through improvement planning.

Evidence:

Question 3.5: How well does the service engage with feedback from stakeholders and address issues they identify?

Areas for Development:

In light of the evidence given above, identify areas that the service would like to develop in order to do better.

Priorities for Improvement:

These are the priority areas that need immediate improvement in order to have an *impact on outcomes*. Consider the judgements - this should be about moving from unsatisfactory to adequate, or from adequate to good.

- Continue to develop and embed stakeholders' involvement in contributing towards the local authority's self-evaluation processes and identification of priority areas for improvement.

QUESTION 3: LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT

Question 3.6: How does the service fulfil its' statutory responsibility relating to safeguarding?

JUDGEMENT   < Good >

EVALUATION: When answering the question, consider the ESTYN guidance 3.4 - safeguarding

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Current Position:

Safeguarding is **good** because there are many strong features and whilst there are areas for development there are no significant areas that require improvement. The local authority meets safeguarding regulations and ensures that all school staff remain in compliance with training requirements. The detailed Estyn Self-evaluation form for Safeguarding and Child Protection has been completed and no significant areas for development were identified, although areas for development has been noted across each of the 10 SER questions included in the framework.

A copy of the SER has been provided as an appendix to this SER.

Good Practice:

- 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, polices 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

Evidence:

QUESTION 3: LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT

Question 3.6: How does the service fulfil its' statutory responsibility relating to safeguarding?

Areas for Development:
In light of the evidence given above, identify areas that the service would like to develop in order to do better. • Refer to Appendix 3

Priorities for Improvement:
These are the priority areas that need immediate improvement in order to have an ***impact on outcomes***. Consider the judgements - this should be about moving from unsatisfactory to adequate, or from adequate to good.   No priorities for improvement have been identified