



## Self-Evaluation Report

### Question 3: Leadership and Management

#### Education Services

#### 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?	<Good>
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)

	<b>Date:</b>
Form completed and received:	DD/MM/YYYY
Internal challenge - session:	DD/MM/YYYY
Corporate Management Team session:	DD/MM/YYYY
Reviewed at Scrutiny:	DD/MM/YYYY

## QUESTION 3: LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT

### 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
- 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

#### For Education Services Only

- Please also refer to the relevant considerations from the Estyn self-evaluation framework

#### Current Position:

The effectiveness of leadership remains **adequate** because although important areas requiring improvement are being addressed, although it is too soon to provide a more meaningful evaluation as these improvements are not yet embedded.

There is an increasingly clear focus on strategic priorities for improvement and delivering plans to address these in order to bring about improvements in outcomes and there is a golden thread aligning strategic priorities identified within the Corporate Wellbeing Plan - Focus on the Future, improvement planning and the performance management framework.

The strategic approach to raising standards in schools and to improving outcomes for children and young people has been recalibrated in the Raising Aspirations Raising Standards (RARS) Strategy 2020-2025 which has been approved by Council and is being formally launched in Autumn 2021. The overall strategic direction of the service over the medium to long-term and the important focus on delivering the RARS and other key strategic priorities has also been identified in the Council's Recovery, Transformation and Improvement (RTI) Plan 2020-2025.

These strategic plans include the continued prioritisation of post pandemic recovery as well as addressing the future sustainable structure of the department, performance management and governance, developing the workforce, pupil health & wellbeing, achievement and progression and developing the environment for learning including wider educational settings.

There is also enhanced collaboration with the CSC focusing on their delivery of school improvement support to help the local authority deliver its objectives against the RARS and achieve measurable progress with regards to improvements in school leadership, teaching and learning, and standards in literacy, numeracy and digital

learning. Although this is in its early stages and the effectiveness of these arrangements cannot be judged at the moment. Increased use of school leaders to support school to school working is also required to help deliver improvements in pupil outcomes through better leadership and teaching and learning practices.

Elected members have good engagement with the service through scrutiny and governance frameworks and use these to help shape the service priorities although there is not always effective challenge to 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 becoming better established and leading to more effective services, and this has been considerably strengthened during the pandemic response and recovery.

Increased opportunities for professional learning and for formalising the sharing of learning within the department are important areas to be addressed.

It is worth noting that the above progress made in the effectiveness of strategic leadership has continued to be made during the ongoing covid-19 pandemic response and recovery to which has required an intense and targeted response of crisis management from the services leadership.

The effectiveness of leadership in addressing the response to the pandemic and working collaboratively with schools and other partners has been at least good and often very good.

#### Good Practice:

- The Learning Department has demonstrated good leadership in responding to the crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuring the continuity in service provision and support provided to schools to ensure the wellbeing and educational needs of pupils have continued to be met.
- This has involved a collaborative approach with Headteachers, other partners within the local authority, outside agencies and other local authorities to ensure appropriate and timely support and advice has been provided and suitable solutions found.
- The leadership has prioritised response to the pandemic whilst maintaining focus on existing and emerging strategic priorities and business as usual wherever possible to ensure progress is able to be made at the pace required to deliver the improvements required
- Feedback from the ESTYN review between March 2020 and October 2020 highlights a number of positive steps taken by the local authority in supporting our schools and PRU's through the pandemic
- One of the main strengths of the local authority response to COVID-19 has been the development of a collaborative approach that has supported schools and the PRU to work together effectively to overcome common challenges. This has helped the authority produce a range of useful guidance that has been co-constructed with school leaders and teachers, drawing on their experience of providing childcare and distance learning in the early part of the pandemic.
- The local authority worked closely with headteachers and challenge advisers to develop a one-page report to parents that was used by all its schools and the PRU. This approach has been shared with other local authorities.
- Officers worked closely with pilot primary and secondary schools and the PRU to test 'readiness for opening' strategies looking at space, teaching capacity and the use of community bases and blended

learning pedagogy in settings. This has resulted in an online consultation sharing videos and photographs with other schools and the PRU to help them consider their own return to school arrangements.

- In cases where schools or the PRU were finding it difficult to establish and maintain contact with vulnerable pupils eligible to access hub provision, the local authority established a clear process to escalate these concerns to a multi-agency vulnerable learner's panel. Education services worked jointly with representatives from CLA to support the panel, and through engagement with the Early Help Hub, Supporting Change, Inclusion and ALN panels attended the Vulnerable Learner's Panel along with representatives from the police and health.
- Following a discussion between the local authority and its four secondary schools, the local authority has commissioned the regional consortium to explore the possibility of creating a platform to enable teachers to work together to create shared blended learning resources.
- In addition, the local authority is working with schools to explore how teachers can share effective practice in teaching across secondary schools digitally. This is likely to facilitate the opportunity for teachers to observe colleagues from other schools deliver lessons and discuss the effectiveness and impact of strategies on learning. A deputy heads group has been established to consider how this ambition can be achieved. In itself, the formation of this group has already led to increased sharing of practice and knowledge about effective practice in different departments across the secondary schools in the authority.
- Since the start of the new academic year, the local authority has begun to evaluate its response to the pandemic and consider whether the multi-disciplinary, multiagency arrangements that were successful can be refined to be more sustainable and linked to local need. For example, the vulnerability panel that was established in response to the first lockdown is considering whether their work could be realigned on a cluster basis to address localised challenges in an integrated way. This would be entirely in line with, the ambitions set out in the local authority's Raising Aspiration, Raising Standards strategy.
- The local authority's youth service has maintained contact with young people throughout the pandemic. Since September, engagement has increased and is supported by face-to-face school-based contact also. More recently youth workers have moved from centre-based work to street youth work. They provide advice and support to young people on how to stay safe and point them in the direction of helplines and support services.
- The Raising Aspirations Rising Standards (RARS) Strategy approved by Council on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2020 is the local authority's flagship learning strategy for the five year period 2020-2025 to improve and sustain education outcomes ensuring 'success for every child'.
- The RARS strategy was developed in co-construction with a wide range of stakeholders and partners including CSC, Headteachers, Governors, Learning Department Team Leaders / management teams, other local authority officers whose roles support Local Government Education Services, Cabinet members, Councillors, youth forums, Corporate Management Team and Scrutiny Committee.
- Learning Department officers and elected members share a common vision, objectives and purpose as articulated by the RARS strategy.
- This vision and the strategic priorities permeate the Focus on Your Performance employee appraisal scheme and is also widely disseminated with staff through the department Learning Away Days.
- The 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 and the vision of securing improved outcomes through a self-improving school system is clear and well-articulated.
- In recognition of the critical role played by the CSC in supporting the development of schools through improved leadership, teaching and learning and readiness for curriculum reform, the collaboration and partnership with the CSC has been strengthened with a Commitments to RARS Action Plan

detailing the specific actions to be undertaken by the CSC in support of securing improved outcomes in schools over the period of the RARS.

- 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. These arrangements will now incorporate monitoring progress against the Commitments to RARS Action Plan.
- 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 wellbeing plan Focus on the Future.
- Comprehensive evaluation and monitoring of data on standards and the quality of education, including trends and progress over time is routinely reported to Cabinet, Council and Scrutiny Committee
- However, due to the current changes to the accountability framework, the available comparative data for 2019/20 and 2020/21 is limited and alternative arrangements for reporting the performance of learners in Merthyr Tydfil is being considered by the learning department in collaboration with schools and the CSC.
- The Council's Recovery, Transformation and Improvement Plan (RTI) includes a key focus on improving education outcomes through delivering against the strategic priorities identified in the RARS and demonstrates synergy and alignment between core corporate and learning strategies.
- The range of senior officer and member 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.
- The Learning 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.
- 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.
- 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 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.
- Senior officers have collaborated with IT officers to ensure the Hwb Infrastructure Programme is sustainable and fit for purpose in partnership with the Schools Digital Strategy Group and the Schools Forum. Funds are being secured through the budget 2021/22 to ensure Waves 1-3 of the programme are match funded 50/50 between schools and local authority in line with Schools Forum recommendations.
- 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.
- The established partnership working in Youth Support Services enables the authority to take a strategic approach when planning future services. A key driver of the arrangements is 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.
- The local authority has worked effectively in partnership with other LAs across the region to develop readiness for the ALNET. This focused on ensuring school and LA readiness and providing transitioning support for the bill implementation and roll out. The aim of the partnership working has been 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.
- 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.
- Arrangements for securing sufficient nursery education in both the English and Welsh Medium sectors including agreeing revenue budgets to support additional WM provision were approved by Council in January 2020

- The local authority's Band B SOP for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools demonstrates an integrated strategic approach at a local and national level including co-location of early years provision and Welsh Medium places. 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 21<sup>st</sup> Century schools Band A, and a second federation involving neighbouring schools in the south of the county borough.
- Proposals to form a 3-16 VA school on a single site in the place of the four existing VA schools was approved in Sep 2019 and this was followed up with a consultation in Nov 2020 to select the preferred site for the new build. The project is currently at design development stage and is expected to progress to construction phase early in 2022.

### 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 2019
- Background paper IA 3.1, November 2019
- Update to Scrutiny on response during pandemic September 2020
- Estyn review of LA response to COVID19 pandemic
- RARS Strategy 2020-25 & Council report approving RARS 25<sup>th</sup> November 2020
- RARS stakeholder group meetings / minutes / notes (various)
- Learning Away Day agendas/attendance/notes from sessions
- Learning Away Days – officer presentation on priority work and links to RARS
- Focus on Your Performance / 1-1s record on HR21
- Headteacher Forum agendas
- Chairs/Vicechairs of Governors Forum agendas
- CSC Commitment to RARS Action Plan
- LA / CSC Performance Meeting minutes
- Scrutiny Report – National Categorisation of Schools, January 2020 (see IA 2.1)
- Focus on the Future Corporate Plan, Best Start Objective 2020/21
- Annual Performance Report 2019/20
- Recovery, Transformation and Improvement (RTI) Plan 2020-25
- Scrutiny work programme / reporting schedule 2020-2021
- IA1 scrutiny report on performance outcomes January/February 2020

- Risk Management Committee minutes
- Business Improvement Plans and Team plans
- ADEW / CSC representative groups membership / attendance
- Manager's Academy & ADEW Future Leaders accreditation
- SPB minutes
- KQ 2.1 Oct 2020 – engagement with corporate support services
- CMT minutes
- Schools Digital Strategy group minutes 2020
- Schools Forum/working group minutes re Hwb sustainability
- Schools Forum work programme 19/20 and 20/21, agendas/minutes
- YSS meeting minutes
- YSS Steering Group TOR
- YSS Strategic Plan
- Early Years Strategy Group Minutes
- NEET Steering Group minutes
- Play Sufficiency Steering Group minutes
- Speech & Language SLA Cwm Taf Morgannwg
- VI & Mobility SLA, Ed Psych SLA (RCT)
- Greenfield Special School Outreach
- ALNET Readiness Toolkit & plan
- ALNET Bill readiness updates to L&L scrutiny
- WESP
- Nursery Sufficiency Council Report, Jan 20
- Band B Cabinet report April 2019, Strategic Outline Programme (2017, 2019)
- 3-16 VA School Reorganisation Sep 2019, School Site Consultation Jan 2021

#### 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.
- 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
- 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.

- Successfully launch the RARS strategy and monitor progress during 2021 ensuring delivery in line with expectations.
- Ensure good progress is made in the delivery of the CSC Commitments to Action Plan in order to help improve leadership, teaching and learning, literacy and oracy standards and readiness for curriculum reform and so help deliver improvements in pupil outcomes
- 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.
- To develop a more robust sharing of information at Team Around School (TAS) meetings in order to target timely and effective support and intervention in schools.
- 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.

## QUESTION 3: LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT

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

#### JUDGEMENT

< Good >

**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

#### For Education Services Only

Please also refer to the relevant considerations from the Estyn self-evaluation framework

#### Current Position:

People management is good because there are strong features which outweigh weaknesses and significant improvements have been made to address staff motivation and engagement in the future strategic direction of the learning department.

Staff resilience is excellent and team working is very good and this has been a prominent feature throughout the response to the COVID 19 pandemic and provides clear evidence of the strength that the department has in its staff, in addition to the commitment to drive forward strategic improvements and priorities in the midst of the pandemic.

For this year's iteration of KQ3, the 360-degree appraisal toolkit has been incorporated to inform primary evaluation and analysis of leadership and management within the service. The toolkit has been introduced on a 'light-touch' basis for this year as this is the first year of its inclusion in the self-evaluation response. Engagement with the 360-degree appraisal scheme was positive with a response rate of 93% (28 out of 30 forms received).

The toolkit contains a number of different themes to be evaluated that are crucial to effective leadership and management; these are:

- Human Skills;
- Leadership; Communication;
- Developing Others;
- Delegation and Instruction; and
- Values

Each of the themes listed above includes a number of sub-questions that are scored between 1 and 6, with 6 being the highest score. The aggregated score for each of the themes listed above was 5, which is a strong score that reflects positively on the leadership and management across education services.

Analysis of the findings has been undertaken; the feedback from the completed 360's highlighted a number of positive attributes across the Education management structure which supports the holistic judgement of leadership

and management as being **good**. Some areas for development were also identified as part of the 360 process; these will form part of the feedback to officers during Focus on my Performance sessions (1-2-1 appraisals).

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 been 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. This service contraction has further been addressed through the capacity exercise with some key posts identified to address issues of resilience and resource capacity to be able to take forward identified strategic priorities. Formal approval for some of this additional resource is still required as part of the budget setting process 2021/22.

There still remains 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, which has been identified as a strategic priority within the Recovery, Transformation and Improvement Plan, delivers more capacity in priority areas. Also, further clarity on the direction of travel for the Learning Department and the implications for regional working / local authority mergers would still be of further benefit to staff.

### 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 1-2 years as there has been more stability in these services at all levels.
- The Learning Away Days have helped improve and sustain 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.
- 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 Tydfil is an excellent feature of the department's staff and this has been particularly valuable during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The effectiveness of staff in responding to COVID-19 to ensure continuity of service delivery and delivery of different and new services, in very difficult and ever-changing circumstances has been of a very high standard.
- This has been achieved whilst maintaining business as usual wherever required and taking forward strategic priorities often meeting very challenging timescales and deadlines.
- 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.
- 360 degree feedback has been rolled out at the senior leadership team level during the Autumn Term 2020 and this has enabled the service to evaluate and reflect on the performance of its senior leaders and managers.
- The aggregated score for the leadership and management themes assessed through the 360 feedback was 5 out of 6, which is a strong score that reflects positively on the leadership and management across education services.

### Evidence:

- Background paper IA 3.2, November 2019
- ESLT minutes
- Staff sickness records (HR21)
- 360 degree feedback process
- 360 degree summary outcomes on Leadership & Management of service
- Learning Away Days – officer presentation on priority work and links to RARS
- Learning Away Day agenda / attendance / session notes
- Focus on Your Performance / 1-1s record on HR21
- Business Improvement Plans / Team Plans
- Estyn review of LA response to COVID19 pandemic
- Update to Scrutiny on response during pandemic September 2020

## QUESTION 3: LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT

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

#### Areas for Development:

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.

Continue to develop the role of the Learning Away days to ensure an holistic view of working practices and ways forward

#### Priorities for Improvement:

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

Widen the scope of the 360-degree appraisal scheme by introducing key partners and stakeholders to the process, as well as extending the opportunity for the wider teams within Education services to take part in the process to enable a more 'true' 360 approach.

## 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

#### For Education Services Only

Please also refer to the relevant considerations from the Estyn self-evaluation framework

#### 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 service improvements. The authority makes good use of the funding it receives and increasingly spending and investment decisions are driven by identified strategic priorities for improvement. Partnership activity delivers good value for money because it contributes to improved provision and outcomes for learners in aspects which the authority and its schools alone could not provide.

The local authority has an ambitious 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools and Capital Programme that makes the best use of available grant and match funded resources to address strategic priorities for Education, schools and early years. Sustainability of the ICT Hwb project for schools (Waves 1 -3) has been secured through match funding agreed between schools and the local authority ensuring this strategic investment in improved ICT for digital learning is sustainable over the long-term. The schools delegated formula funding has been reviewed and is now simpler, needs based and efficient with Heads having agreed the new formula in collaboration with the Schools Forum and Corporate Accountancy. The REFIT carbon management energy project has also been approved for implementation across school during 2021 with expected benefits in carbon and financial savings. Funds to increase the provision of Welsh Medium education places across the nursery/primary sectors have also been set aside in response to the Council's commitment to delivering sufficient welsh medium places in the nursery/primary education sectors.

Key posts and capacity have been identified and supported through budget setting and the corporate capacity exercise to ensure improved resilience and that the requisite capacity and internal capability to progress strategic priority areas is improved. The preparedness to commit additional resources to invest in the Learning Department and its strategic priorities is a positive indication of the recognition that, good spending decisions in this area increase the likelihood of positive outcomes over the medium to long term for Education and the local authority overall.

## 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.
- Examples of this are; additional staff resources to support the transitioning to the ALNET Bill and to support the continued development of Capita One (both these areas have been supported through the capacity exercise), additional resources to support c21 schools (Band B programme), revenue funds to support the seedling of a third WM school, and funds to support the sustainability of the ICT Hwb grant for 21<sup>st</sup> Century IT infrastructure and kit in schools.
- Additional resources have been secured from the local authority's budget to support the outcomes of the ALN review. These resources have enabled enhanced specialist provisions to be set up across both the Primary and Secondary sector for the transitional period through to September 2022
- Some of the additional resources in support of the transition since 2018/19 have been secured 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 local authority also proactively seeks and uses external grant funding, both revenue and capital, to address its own and schools' priorities.
- The allocation of the local authority's capital and corporate maintenance budget as well as WGs Capital Maintenance Grant reflects 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 school site/s 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. Further reviews of the Behaviour/School support service and Education Welfare Service are expected in 2021.
- The LAs Strategic Education Projects (SEPs) budget (£25k in 20/21) and Annex B CSC budget (£7k in 20/21) are available resources to support school improvement strategies within schools and the LA and both budgets are allocated based on emerging risks and agreed school improvement priorities.

- 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.
- 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 2020/21 is fourteen or 41%. 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 formula allocation has been subject to a fundamental review since 2019 – this has been undertaken by the Group Accountant for Education in collaboration with the Schools Forum and all Headteachers across the local authority. The revised formula allocation is to be implemented in April 2021
- Carbon management projects in schools have been approved by the Schools Forum and Cabinet as part of the REFIT programme financed through Salix loans. These projects will be implemented in 2021 and will deliver critical carbon savings and financial savings in the funding of schools energy.
- 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. The allocation of funds in 21/22 are currently under discussion in terms of the appropriate dataset to use due to the delay in PLASC 2021 from January to March.
- All schools use school spending plans for WG grants; EIG, PDG etc. which are signed off by CAs. Schools are encouraged 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. The build is expected to be completed May 2021.

- The learning department has requested funds (subject to budget approval) to deliver a holistic condition survey programme of all the learning portfolio between April 21 and March 24. This will enable the local authority to better plan for improving the condition of its stock using all available funds over the medium to long term.
- 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.
- A review of Capita One use in Merthyr by RCT in 2018/19 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.
- Additional investment in the Capita Cloud hosting and maintenance solution was approved in July 2019 and this new technical solution went live in January 2020 and proved an effective solution supporting remote working during the COVID 19 pandemic March 2020 onwards. Additional staff resources have been allocated to enable a central Capita One Team to be set up (subject to budget approval) from April 2021 onwards and this is linked to a wider corporate strategy to develop a central data team in support of all services.
- The local authority 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 Integrated Service SLA, 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 since April 2018 with the three year arrangements being retendered for April 2021.
- The local authority has also redirected resources to support the delivery of its own Hearing Impaired (HI) service following RCT serving notice on the SLA provision during the first term of delivery.
- 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 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, however the changes to the availability of performance data mean that this analysis can no longer be undertaken pending the development of revised comparative performance measures.
- 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 including the categorisation of schools.
- 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.
- This review of SLAs was followed up for the current 2018-2021 cycle and again for the upcoming cycle 2021-2024 with the main focus on HR, Property Services, School Catering Service and School Caretaking and Cleaning Services.
- All SLAs are subject to annual evaluations, and in the Summer 2020 every SLA was rated at least Good overall with some regarded as Excellent. However, there are those that have individual ratings by some schools as adequate or unsatisfactory and these are then identified for further review by the Schools Forum in conjunction with the appropriate service managers so that issues can be addressed.

#### Evidence:

- Background paper IA3.3, November 2019
- Budget Papers 2020/21 and 2021/22
- L&L Scrutiny Budget Report 2019/20 (LRB and PRU growth)
- LRB Transitional budget 2021/22
- Nursery Sufficiency Council report Jan 2020
- Capital Budget 2020/21 onwards / Corporate Mtce Budget 2020/21
- WG Capital Mtce Grant 19/20 and 20/21
- Bands A / B C21 Schools Programme
- Band B SOP August 2017 / Revised SOP February 2019
- Learning Department Asset Management Plan Matrix
- Reducing Infant Class sizes Capital & Revenue bid & approvals
- WM Capital Grant Bid & approvals
- Early Years Capital bid & approvals
- Structures 2014/15, 2019/20 and proposed 21/22
- ESP Budget 2020/21 & Annex B 2020/21
- ISB Funding Reductions to Schools Cabinet Reports 2018/19, 2019/20
- Schools Forum Agendas/Minutes
- Schools Balances Cabinet Report 2019-2021
- Schools Financial Monitoring, Scrutiny and Intervention Policy
- Finance committee minutes
- Schools Financial monitoring meetings Minutes
- Various school PLD / VER Business cases
- Formula Allocation review 2019-2020, Consultation papers & SF minutes
- Pupil led review 2014-2016 Schools Forum report
- Social Needs Cabinet report 2017
- REFIT Schools Projects, Schools Forum minutes, Cabinet report Jan 2021
- Small & Rural schools bid & approvals
- Cluster supply bid & approvals
- YYG Band A programme
- Capita One Review – Report 2018/19
- Capita One Cabinet report July 2019 re Cloud hosting & maintenance contract
- Speech & Language SLA Cwm Taf Morgannwg

- VI & Mobility SLA, Ed Psych SLA (RCT)
- Exchange Counselling SLA
- Greenfield Special School Outreach
- CSC VfM Report to L&L Scrutiny March 2020
- Performance meeting minutes 2020/21
- Schools Forum SLA fundamental review 2015-2018 minutes/papers
- SLA Annual evaluations 2015/16 onwards
- Schools Forum three year SLA review 2021-2024, minutes / papers

### 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. In recognition of the increasing financial risk that schools face over the short to medium term, ensure all schools are able to deliver sustainable financial plans and balance their budgets over the medium term.
2. To ensure sufficient staffing resources within key areas across the Learning department to enable delivery of all key strategic priorities – this may require realignment through the proposed restructure but also additional investment may be required where identified and may have implications for future budget rounds.

##### 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. To inform ongoing strategic asset management and capital investment plans, implement and deliver a holistic condition survey programme for all stock in the Learning Portfolio over the three-year period to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024
2. To agree an overall strategic asset management plan for the Learning portfolio
3. To agree additional resource investment that may be required to ensure specialist provision in the secondary school sector is fit for purpose and of sufficient capacity to support the needs of children and young people over the short, medium and long-term.

## 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

#### For Education Services Only

Please also refer to the relevant considerations from the Estyn self-evaluation framework

#### Current Position:

The service increasingly 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. The services self-evaluation and improvement planning processes have supported the development of the RARS Strategy and the identification of relevant and well defined priorities for inclusion in the delivery of RARS action plan.

However, there are still important areas that require improvement in order for priority setting and improvement planning to ultimately lead to improved outcomes in schools and key services and the corporate self-evaluation process needs to be further embedded for there to be robust confidence that the priorities being set by the service are the correct ones. Therefore, it is too early for this area to be evaluated as good and so at this time the judgement remains adequate.

The current self-evaluation processes do 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 new corporate approach to self-evaluation has completed its first cycle and 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, as it

becomes embedded, help to ensure scrutiny and challenge of the Learning Department services and the identification and setting of priorities becomes more and more 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 (where available). 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 Head Teachers. The corporate performance officer link for education services also attends to provide corporate scrutiny, challenge and support.
- The priorities are reflected in the flagship Learning strategy RARS and any additional priorities identified through self-evaluation are either reflected in the RARS Plan, the CSCs Commitments to Action plan or the service/team business improvement plans.
- 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 'Focus on the Future'.
- 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.
- The sharing and use of data within education and the wider Learning department has improved significantly following the implementation of Capita One 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, increased resource capacity is required to develop this further.
- The process of improvement planning formally captures 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. PLEASE NOTE DUE TO CHANGES IN ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES THE SOAP NEEDS REALIGNMENT
- 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.

## QUESTION 3: LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT

### Question 3.4: Does the service set the right priorities?

#### Evidence:

- Background paper IA3.4, November 2019
- ESLT Minutes
- Self-evaluation working papers
- Learning Away Days session notes on self-evaluation
- RARS Commitments monitoring plan
- CSC Commitments to Action Plan
- Recovery, Transformation and Improvement monitoring plan
- Business Improvement Plans / Team Plans
- Focus on the Future Corporate Wellbeing Plan 2020-21, Best Start Objectives
- Annual Performance Report 2019/20
- Best Start SOAP
- Raising Standards SOAP
- PIAP 2012 Progress Jan 2016 – monitoring up to date position
- Estyn Thematic Review action plan
- Team Around the School meeting template / agenda and notes
- Risk Management Committee 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.

Further develop the process to set and monitor business improvement plans.

#### 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.

- Appoint staffing resources to enable the establishment of a Capita One Team and then deliver an agreed development plan to ensure data is used more effectively across the Learning department to inform service priorities for improvement.
- Revise the overall SOAP to identify the key performance indicators that are currently available.

## QUESTION 3: LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT

**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, public events etc.)

### For Education Services Only

- Please also refer to the relevant considerations from the Estyn self-evaluation framework

### 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:

- The Schools Forum's annual evaluation of local authority SLAs is participated in by 100% of schools and is used 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 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.
- 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 which has led to improved leadership and teaching. A Foundation Phase PRU was added in September 2020.
- 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.
- A representative of the Youth Forum 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.
- 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.
- Student conference events focusing on the Future Generation and Wellbeing Act have been held for young people to learn how the new ways of working will impact them 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:

- SLA Annual Evaluation returns
- SLA working groups minutes – Schools Forum minutes
- Headteacher Forums
- Enhanced Provision Headteacher / LA joint working group minutes
- Complaints Guidance for Governing Bodies
- Scrutiny Committee membership
- Pupil engagements / pupil voice
- Youth Forum minutes
- Student conference agendas / papers / notes

### QUESTION 3: LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT

**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.

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

#### 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.

- Establish a headteachers forum to support the local authority in identifying and addressing key priorities across service areas.

### 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 Self-evaluation form for Safeguarding and Child Protection

#### 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. This is currently being updated.

#### Good Practice:

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. All schools engaged with this process during the academic year 2019/20. This has recently commenced for the academic year 2020/21. The self-evaluation form aims to enable schools to monitor and evaluate their own safeguarding arrangements. The self-assessment audit tool will be used in schools to:

- Ensure all staff are aware of their safeguarding arrangements;
- Provide brief feedback at the end of the self-assessment audit to school staff;
- Highlight appropriate training requirements if deemed necessary.
- All school governing bodies have adopted the Cwm Taf exemplar Child Safeguarding Policy for 2018/19 and that for 2020/21 which was updated in the Spring/Summer of 2020 and then endorsed by the CTMSB at the end of the Summer term.
- The Child Safeguarding Policy and self-evaluation audit tool are updated annually. During 2020 further updates were made in respect of the following;
  - Reference to the new All Wales Safeguarding Procedures+ link
  - Updated Prevent information

- Insertion of a number of links to documents in different sections
  - Inclusion of information on staying safe online and distance learning (in view of the current situation- but always applicable)
  - Appendix 10- guidance and legislation – all have links
  - Inclusion of the BCBC recruitment policy in Appendix 11
  - Inclusion of guidance on COVID 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 updated and 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 has 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 is routinely an agenda item at the Headteacher’s Forum. External agencies are also invited to present at to this group e.g. WECTU and Counter Terrorism.
    - “Counter Terrorism Lockdown” Training was due to be delivered by the Police in March 2020, but this has had to be postponed due to the pandemic. We are waiting to hear when the Police have the facility to deliver this online.
    - 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.
    - All schools have a governor who has responsibility for safeguarding. 100% of schools that have completed the SER have Governors who have responsibility for safeguarding trained to Level 3.
    - 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. These are available on Hwb.
  - Education has representation on the Cwm Taf Safeguarding Board and its Subgroups to ensure that it is aware of new policies and protocols and therefore best placed to share good practice.
  - The local authority Corporate Safeguarding Group continues to meet termly 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.
  - Online safeguarding training has been developed that all LA staff have accessed. This now forms part of staff induction.
  - Online Safeguarding training modules produced by Welsh Government have been shared with schools and local authority colleagues

The COVID pandemic and the Stay-at-Home rules have required a number of adjustments to services that support vulnerable families. There is particular concern about the impact of these changes for children at risk and their families as services and schools close or reduce their visiting and intervention in the community in order to protect the public and staff. The safeguarding of children at risk continues to be a priority for partner agencies of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board. The Learning Department has established an approach to

supporting vulnerable learners, and prioritising the most vulnerable, who may require access to the Hubs.

#### Definition of vulnerable learners

All schools have been asked to keep in touch with their pupils, especially those that are deemed vulnerable. Those most vulnerable could fall into the following categories:

- Pupils on the child protection register;
- Pupils in need of care and support from social care;
- Pupils deemed to be red on vulnerability profiles, effectively with safeguarding and welfare needs;
- Looked after children;
- Young Carers;
- Pupils with disabilities;
- Pupils with statements of ALN; and
- Families in known financial difficulty.

#### Support for all vulnerable learners

Since the closure of our schools the priority has been to significantly reduce social contact, to reduce the transmission of Covid 19, while continuing to provide support for vulnerable learners. In the majority of cases, children should be cared for by their families in the home, and schools should provide support remotely, working with other agencies where necessary.

Every child who can be safely cared for at home should be, and only where there is no safe alternative should provision be made in schools or other settings.

Throughout the period of school closure, schools should:

- 'check-in' with vulnerable pupils and their families at least once a week via e- mail, telephone or other communication methods used by the school such as Class DoJo; and
- Monitor and record the wellbeing of vulnerable learners and their families following the usual processes i.e. Myconcerns and escalate any concerns around welfare, to enable appropriate action. All safeguarding concerns will be reported following the usual procedures.

#### Process of escalation

As we are working to different arrangements it is important that colleagues from different agencies and settings work together now more so than ever in order to enable the safety and wellbeing of the most vulnerable children. The LA has a register of its most vulnerable learners as per the list above and from agencies caseloads. A Triage Panel meets weekly on a Tuesday to discuss any concerns that have been received via the EWS mailbox. School and agencies have been asked to report by exception to the mailbox below. This return should only include feeding back on things over and above what teams would deal with as part of their usual daily business.

Education Welfare Team [Education.WelfareTeam@merthyr.gov.uk](mailto:Education.WelfareTeam@merthyr.gov.uk)

Concerns will be recorded, and team members will be identified to confirm next steps by a Triage Panel. It will be the responsibility of the Team Leader to coordinate the keeping in touch system within the team. The Team Leader will then be responsible for the reporting by exception to the above mailbox.

KIT guidance and questions to use when contacting the family have been produced to support colleagues as part of this process.

All concerns that cannot be dealt with via this process were initially escalated to the Bronze Command Safeguarding Panel, but as this no longer meets, escalations are made to the Police directly.

The support given to schools on safeguarding has always referred back to the WG guidance document on Blended Learning that was issued in the first lockdown and has been recently updated. [Live-streaming and video-conferencing: safeguarding principles and practice](#). Originally issued in May 2020, the updated guidance reflects a change to enable **decision-making at a school or setting level** to determine the most appropriate approach to live-streaming or video-conferencing for their setting. All normal standards of behaviour apply in the online classroom and as such behaviour incidents will be dealt with in the usual way. This includes any incidents of bullying. All pupils and staff have been asked to sign Acceptable User Policies (AUP) in order to be part of the

online learning.

**Evidence:**

- Schools Safeguarding Policy
- Estyn Self-evaluation document for Safeguarding and Child Protection

## 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 Estyn Self-evaluation document for Safeguarding and Child Protection

### 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