

## **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT**

Date Written	21 <sup>st</sup> March 2023
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Service Area	Education
Committee Date	10 <sup>th</sup> May 2023

# **The Effectiveness of the Central South Consortium (CSC)**

## **1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide an update on the current position of the Central South Consortium (CSC) – see Appendix 1.
- 1.2 The local authority commissions the CSC to provide effective monitoring, challenge, support and intervention for all schools.
- 1.3 To ensure that improvements in outcomes continue, the local authority must continue to hold the CSC to account for delivering services that impact positively on standards, which was recognised in the inspection of the local authority in January 2022.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 The report is discussed and noted.
- 2.2 Scrutiny members consider whether any further information should be presented.

## **3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Since 2012, the CSC has delivered aspects of school improvement services on behalf of five local authorities: Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Vale of Glamorgan. This covers 381 schools and 32% of school pupils in Wales. It is a growing region with a rapidly changing demographic, encompassing increasingly diverse communities across the economic sub region. It remains the region with the highest number of children living in poverty, with approximately 25% of pupils eligible for free school meals.

- 3.2 The service delivers challenge and support to schools on behalf of the five local authorities within the Central South Region, governed through a Joint Committee of Cabinet Members from each local authority. The Joint Committee meets regularly and formally approves the annual business plan and budget for the service, holding the service to account in terms of performance and budgetary control.
- 3.3 Scrutiny Committees in each of the five authorities invite the CSC to report and present on the work of CSC in supporting schools aligned to the Evaluation, Improvement and Accountability Framework (Welsh Government, 2022). An annual report from the Consortium relating to progress in the previous academic year and priorities for the year ahead is provided.
- 3.4 The core focus of all school improvement activity is providing support and challenge to schools to ensure learners across the local authority have the right educational experiences to allow them to make progress and be successful in the next phase of learning or employment.

#### **4.0 WHERE WE WERE**

- 4.1 Prior to the pandemic, value for money was able to be demonstrated through accountability measures. These reports were presented to Scrutiny and Cabinet.
- 4.2 Since accountability measures changed CSC have presented reports in a different format and during the pandemic did not present reports to Scrutiny.
- 4.3 This is the first significant report to Scrutiny since October 2017, although reports have been shared at CSC's Joint Committee on which the Cabinet member for Education sits.

#### **5.0 WHERE WE ARE NOW**

- 5.1 This report outlines the impact of work in the CSC's business plan on Merthyr Tydfil.
- 5.2 It documents the impact of the challenge and support provided by the Consortium on behalf of Merthyr Tydfil. This includes:
- overview of performance including learning priorities, findings from reintroduced Estyn inspections and progress of schools in a follow up Estyn category;
  - support for schools including the work programme of Improvement Partners;
  - engagement in professional learning and support including Central South Wales Challenge, collaborations, school leadership and governance, curriculum, Welsh and early career;
  - work to promote equity in schools;
  - contribution to supporting the priorities of Merthyr Tydfil;
  - value for money; and
  - sharing of practice.

## **6.0 WHERE WE WANT TO BE**

- 6.1 All schools across Merthyr Tydfil receiving the appropriate support and challenge to ensure sustained school improvement.
- 6.2 All schools in Merthyr Tydfil to have positive inspection outcomes.
- 6.3 Officers from the CSC and local authority to work effectively together to support and challenge all aspects of the school improvement journey.

## **7.0 WHAT WE NEED TO DO NEXT**

- 7.1 To ensure that improvements in outcomes continue, the local authority must continue to hold the CSC to account for delivering services that impact positively on standards. This is through:
- termly local authority performance meetings;
  - monthly Directors' meetings to determine strategy and to monitor and evaluate the implementation and impact of the strategy;
  - quarterly meetings of the Joint Education Service Committee with Elected Members which agrees the strategy and business plan, and agrees and monitors the budget and performance; and
  - ensuring CSC report at least annually to the Scrutiny Committee.

## **8.0 CONTRIBUTION TO RAISING ASPIRATIONS RAISING STANDARDS STRATEGY**

- 8.1 The contents of this report relate to the following RARS Themes and Goals:

### Themes

- Partnership and Collaboration
- Pandemic Recovery

### Goals

- Developing the Education Workforce
- Improving Achievement and Progression

## **9.0 CONTRIBUTION TO WELLBEING OBJECTIVES**

- 9.1 This report specifically links to the Best Start to Life objective within the Council's Corporate Wellbeing Plan: Children and young people get the best start to life and are equipped with the skills they need to be successful learners and confident individuals.

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**DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION**

**COUNCILLOR MICHELLE JONES**  
**CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION**

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

<b>Title of Document(s)</b>	<b>Document(s) Date</b>	<b>Document Location</b>
The Effectiveness of the Central South Consortium – Report to Scrutiny	12 <sup>th</sup> September 2016	1. <a href="https://www.merthyr.gov.uk/council/councillors-and-committees/committees/scrutinylearning&amp;laescyp">https://www.merthyr.gov.uk/council/councillors-and-committees/committees/scrutinylearning&amp;laescyp</a> 2. Learning Department
Achieving improvement in support to schools through regional education consortia - a review of progress Memorandum for the Public Accounts Committee WAO	November 2016	1. <a href="http://www.audit.wales/publication/achieving-improvement-support-schools-through-regional-education-consortia">http://www.audit.wales/publication/achieving-improvement-support-schools-through-regional-education-consortia</a> 2. Learning Department
Achieving improvement in support to schools through regional education consortia – an early view WAO	June 2015	1. <a href="http://www.audit.wales/publication/achieving-improvement-support-schools-through-regional-education-consortia-early-view">http://www.audit.wales/publication/achieving-improvement-support-schools-through-regional-education-consortia-early-view</a> 2. Learning Department
<b>Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?</b>		<b>No</b>