

## **RARS review and output updates.**

**Appropriate progress is being made with the implementation of the Raising Aspirations, Raising Standards Strategy for Education. A range of activities/outputs have been carried out, with demonstrable outcomes visible. As the strategy is half-way through its life-span, further time is still needed to see the impact of a range of commitment and evaluate their overall success in raising aspirations and raising standards.**

**The current position in outcomes and standards indicate improving trends across a range of indicators.**

### **Current position in outcomes and standards**

Since 2021, a minority of schools have been inspected, with the majority of outcomes positive. Around half of the schools inspected have been asked to submit effective practice case studies. Children and young people's literacy and communication skills, numeracy, Welsh and digital skills are improving area and continues to receive focused attention and support. Literacy and numeracy are a focus of all School Development Plans.

All schools have started to implement the new curriculum and are continuing to develop their approaches to assessing pupil progress. This includes the use of both qualitative and quantitative approaches, with school tracking systems being refined.

In Key Stage 3, In 2022-23, outcomes in all core subjects at level 5+ improved from 2021-22 and are above national averages. Outcomes at level 6+ improved in English and Science, with science moving above the national average. Mathematics declined slightly in line with the national picture. Welsh second language outcomes have improved from 2021-22 and are significantly above national averages.

Performance in national measures at Key Stage 4 continue to improve on 2019 outcomes. In 2023, the Capped 9 Point Score was significantly higher than 2019, a difference of 32.7 points. The gap between from the national average has decreased from 41.0 points in 2019 to 12.1 points in 2023. When compared to other local authorities, MTCBC is ranked 17/22 in 2023 compared to 22/22 in 2019. Performance in the Capped 9 point score is 4.2 points above modelled outcomes based on FSM eligibility. The average Literacy point score is the strongest of the core subjects. It was 1.7 points higher than 2019, which is above the national increase therefore the gap from the national average has reduced from 3 points in 2019 to 2 points in 2023 . When compared to other local authorities, MTCBC is ranked 19/22 in 2023 compared to 22/22 in 2019. Literacy has been a focus area of the directorate. All schools have seen an increase in their literacy points score in 2023 when compared to 2019.

The average Numeracy point score is generally in line with 2019 and has maintained the gap with Wales at –3.2 percentage points. 54% of Mathematics examinations entered received a grade A\*-C in 2023 compared with 46.8% in 2019. In 2019 the gap between MTCBC and the Welsh average was 3.3 percentage points, in 2023, the LA outperformed Wales by 0.5pp. The national trend in Mathematics is a decline in the A\*/A and A\*-C entries indicator- however, the LA trend shows an increase, moving the LA closer to Wales. (Wales 15.2%; LA 13.8 A\*/A) The gap between the LA and Wales in numeracy A\*-C entries has significantly decreased to -7.8pp from -17.5 in 2022 and -23.7 in 2019. The gap at A\*/A has also decreased again to -5.3 from -7.4 in 2022 and -9.9 in 2019.

Science is a key area of development. The average Science point score was 2.6 points lower than 2019 but 3.0 points lower than 2019 and the gap between the LA and Wales has grown to –2.5. 58% of Double Award Science examinations entered received a grade A\*-C in 2023 compared with 55% in 2019. In 2019 the MTCBC average was 2.7 percentage points higher than the Welsh average, in 2023 the MTCBC average was 5.5 percentage points higher. Performance in the Science indicator is slightly below (0.1 points) modelled outcomes based on FSM eligibility. The average Welsh point score was 25.4, a decrease of 3.8 percentage points from 2019. 58.7% of Welsh second language examinations entered received a grade A\*-C in 2023 compared with 55.8% in 2019. In 2019 the gap between MTCBC and the Welsh average was 7.4 percentage points, this has decreased to 4.4 percentage points in 2023. Outcomes and the entry profile for Welsh are an area for development in line with the LA WESP.

Standards for NEETS are good. Most young people progress to a first destination when they complete their compulsory education in Year 11. Within Merthyr Tydfil the combined NEET and ‘unknown’ destination figure for 2022 of 2.7% (15 young people) is above last year’s figure of 2.1% but below the Wales average of 3.1% and ranks the local authority as 8<sup>th</sup> for its combined performance in 2022. In this regard, the local authority had the best performance in the Central South region and across other neighbouring local authorities. For **2022**, the published Welsh Government NEET figure in Merthyr Tydfil was 2.3%, equating to 13 young people, slightly above the Wales average of 2.1%. The ‘unknown’ figure in Merthyr Tydfil was 0.4% (2 young people) which is lower than the Wales average of 1%.

At Key Stage 4, the performance of both boys and girls has improved in the Capped 9<sub>and</sub> Literacy indicator, boys performance has improved in the Numeracy and Science indicators but the performance of girls declined slightly.

Over the last two years, there are no schools that have required any follow-up activity related to wellbeing and attitudes to learning. Inspection outcomes from schools indicate that in schools inspected Wellbeing and Attitudes to learning are positive. However, attendance, persistent absence and exclusions require improvement.

**The following presents a summary of progress against the commitment to actions where a range of outputs and in some cases, outcomes, can be seen.**

## GOAL 1: Performance Management and System Governance

2021- Summer 2023		2023-2025	2025- 2026
PANDEMIC RECOVERY		DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING	REALISING AND EMBEDDING
Raise aspirations and raise standards to ensure successful futures for all.	See overview		
<p>Recruit and retain governors with wide-ranging skills set.</p> <p>Strengthen the process through which the Local Authority Governors are recruited and appointed</p>	<p>School governance is developing well, with the recruitment process for LA governors strengthened. This has yielded positive outcomes with the panel meeting 5 times since autumn 2021, appointing 45 governors. The new process has enabled greater efficiency and effectiveness in filling vacancies and recruiting skilled individuals. Overall, governing bodies across Merthyr Tydfil have been supported appropriately to review their own effectiveness. A range of support, in partnership with CSC, has been introduced to assist governors in their democratic accountability role and improve effectiveness in carrying out their statutory responsibilities. These include: Merthyr Tydfil Governor Learning Pathways providing a comprehensive range of training, learning, advice, and development opportunities including the new Estyn framework, self-evaluation tool, School Improvement Guidance, Beyond Performance Measures.</p> <p>Monitoring attendance at training and supporting compliance with mandatory training.</p> <p>Bespoke support and development of school-to-school partnerships</p> <p>Use of Regional Lead for Governance.</p> <p>CSC Termly School Summary and LA Guidance.</p>		

	<p>CSC School Improvement Partner Log (SIPL).</p> <p>CSC Self Evaluation Toolkit.</p> <p>Governor Learning Walks Policy and Protocols (pending)</p> <p>Governor training and learning opportunities are key to ensuring governors keep up to date with the education agenda. They also ensure governors have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, including the systems and structures needed to fulfil these. The LA has provided a range of sessions covering LA statutory areas of responsibility as well as sessions linked to the current educational landscape. Where possible, the LA has used examples of effective practice from school governing bodies to carry out the sessions. Bespoke training and support, as well as school to school partnerships have also been set up.</p>		
	<p>A marketing and communications plan has been developed to support attracting governors to Merthyr Tydfil. This has included a range of social media acetates and blogs written by current governors. Governance has also been included within the SEAL pledge for the Business Education Together Partnership. There are currently 28 vacancies (8%) which is a slight decrease on the previous 2 years. A successful governor conference in July 2023 was utilised to discuss possible future approaches and share practice across governing bodies, including recruitment and retention of governors.</p>		
<p>Review and strengthen the Council’s scrutiny of education settings and learning department activities</p>	<p>The functioning of scrutiny is developing with some different ways of working adopted to allow members to challenge service delivery. These include workshop approaches, task and finish groups and site visits. Elected members have received training and the committee strengthened through increased co-opted members. This has led to better understanding of roles and responsibilities, as well as more diverse questioning from many scrutiny members.</p>		
<p>Review and strengthen the functioning of the</p>	<p>New terms of reference have been put in place, with good practice elements learnt from other local authorities integrated into the model.</p>		

Merthyr Tydfil School Budget Forum			
Establish a Headteacher forum for consultation on all non-financial aspects of the school system and its future development	The Local Authority relationship with Headteachers has been strengthened, with the establishment of a Strategic Headteacher forum, a review of the Schools' budget forum and a range of working parties. This has led to a great collaborative approach and ownership of continued improvement. The Strategic Headteacher forum have impacted directly on the Education Workplace Wellbeing Charter and review of the RARS.		
Improve the management and use of data about the performance of learners through the further development and use of the Capita One system	Capita One Management Information System (MIS) is used to support the delivery of services and the provision of information for School Admissions, Additional Learning Needs (ALN), Inclusion teams, School Wellbeing team, School Transport, Governor Support team, Educational Psychology service, EAL/GT/EHE Team, CLA Education Service, Universal Youth services, Youth Support team, Mental Health and Homelessness team, NEETS team and the Flying Start team. The appointment of an additional 2 posts to support the development of Capita One in 2021 has enabled data quality to be improved, additional use to be developed and information to be more readily available. Key improvements made in the last 12 months include the introduction of a timeline to support Attendance prosecutions, processes to enable youth support and mental health and homelessness team to record involvement with young people, improved processes for managing data conflicts with schools, online referrals to Education psychology service for both schools and early years settings and the review and development of reports in several areas to ensure access to required information.		
Review and strengthen the role of early years settings and wider education partners to improve the quality of experience for all learners.	Good use of the Foundation Phase Profile (FPP) compact as an assessment tool has been made in Early Years, the FPP analysis has identified value added to children's learning and development. This assessment demonstrates an on entry into provision snapshot of children's skills levels and on exit from provision, which allows for an improved ability for target setting for children across all 4 areas of development. All settings have made good use of the WellComm SLC toolkit to identify any speech and language difficulties or delays, this approach has allowed children to receive targeted early intervention as required. This toolkit allows for an on entry into		

	<p>provision snapshot of children’s SLC skills levels and on exit from provision and allows for tracking the progress of all children, regardless of ability. During the 2022/23 academic year 1710 children were screened both at the start and end of the year. at initial assessment 36% of those screened required targeted SLC support. Across all pupils assessed, there was a 34% improvement with 77% of pupils rescreened achieving age appropriate scores in the summer term. There were significant improvements (34%) in boys achieving age-appropriate scores between the initial screening and summer 2023 screening. This was mirrored by girls with a 33% improvement. All clusters saw considerable improvement between screening pupils in the autumn term and summer term following targeted packages of support offered by LSA’s to those pupils who presented as below age-appropriate levels (green)</p> <p>(see BETP)</p>		
<p>Review and revise the partnership between MTCBC and CSC to ensure that it delivers improvement and good value for money</p>	<p>The CSCRARS support plan is bespoke to Merthyr Tydfil and focused on the priorities within the RARS and common priorities within the school SDPs. Focused sessions take place with the Principal Improvement Partner to gain an understanding of schools’ progress and Team Around the School sessions allows for a shared approach to improvement across all education teams. School Improvement Forums support improvement in schools where enhanced support is needed.</p>		
<p>Embed and further develop the approach to tackling poverty across education settings</p>	<p>Expansion of Flying Start commenced in April 2023 with an additional 184 children able to access free child care before entering school. There was 97% takeup of the places on offer.</p> <p>Food and Fun successfully engaged 15 partner schools with 820 free child places. 1-1 support was given to children with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) to ensure participation. There was vast range of sessions which contribute to health and wellbeing including arts and crafts, active play, cooking, nutrition as well as parent/guardian focused sessions. Staff also received training in nutrition and food hygiene. This is an excellent example of partnerships working to meet the emotional and mental wellbeing needs of children, particularly those with vulnerabilities.</p> <p>Free School Meals have been rolled out across the Borough</p>		

## GOAL 2: DEVELOPING THE EDUCATION WORKFORCE

2021-Summer 2023		2023-2025	2025-2026
PANDEMIC RECOVERY		DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING	REALISING AND EMBEDDING
Develop the capacity amongst the workforce to deliver the objectives outlined in 'Our National Mission: high standards and aspirations for all' (updated March 2023)	Schools were provided with a range of support to ensure the workforce was able to provide a hybrid approach. Where appropriate, these approaches have been maintained. To support skills development, Voice 21 and vocabulary work was introduced into all schools. Wellcom was also introduced to support speech and language development. All settings have made good use of the toolkit, and the approach has allowed children to receive targeted early intervention. Collaborative approaches through cluster working led to the development of approaches to wellbeing across the primary phase.		
Develop the capacity amongst the workforce to deliver flexible approaches to learning to manage situations as they arise.			
Establish a culture of education settings as 'learning organisations' and work with all partners to create a culture of professional learning focused on professional	A range of professional learning networks are available for schools through the Central South Consortium.		

<p>dialogue, reflective practice and collaboration.</p>			
<p>Develop opportunities for current leaders and leaders of the future to widen their leadership skills utilising not only the opportunities within Merthyr Tydfil and the region but also with National Academy for Education Leadership (NAEL) and wider holistic leadership programmes</p>	<p>The LA has seen significant changes to leadership in schools over the last three years. Consequently, CSC shaped an LA specific middle leadership programme to build capacity. Core subject leads in three out of the four secondary schools and the PRU participated. The programme feedback was positive and has had direct and specific impact on the quality of leadership and management in half of the schools.</p> <p>Headteachers and Senior Leaders are provided with the opportunity to collaborate extensively through a range of strategic policy delivery groups. Additionally, peer mentoring for new headteachers, executive headteacher opportunities, as well as peer approaches within LA supportive reviews, also provide system leadership approaches within Merthyr Tydfil. These have provided opportunities for internal distribution of leadership, structures for regular dialogue and challenge, knowledge exchange and system approaches. The Inspectorate, Estyn has reported positively on the leadership and governance in the majority of schools inspected over the last two years. Where schools have been placed in a reported category, changes of leadership have taken place or been strengthened through bespoke support.</p> <p>Further work to develop sustainable models for school improvement will be the focus of next steps in this area.</p>		
<p>Develop a range of professional learning opportunities to support school and education team staff to improve their level of Welsh language skills (outlined in detail within the Welsh Education Strategic Plan, 2022-32)</p>	<p>A professional learning network for Merthyr Schools has been established as part of the WEF curriculum sub-group and in partnership with the CSC. The focus was agreed between CSC, the LA and schools and four network meetings have been planned since January 2023. (link to Objective 4). <b>This network currently includes 9 schools.</b></p> <p>CSC provides a range of Welsh language development professional learning (PL) for practitioners as the School Improvement partner. The PL is mapped against the <a href="#">Welsh Language Competency Framework</a> and can be accessed in a variety of ways e.g. asynchronous and face to face.</p>		



	<p>Bespoke PL is also available to individual schools or clusters. Engagement with face to face Welsh language development for practitioners from Merthyr schools is low, however, asynchronous is higher.</p> <p><b>2022/23:</b></p> <p><b>‘Welsh in a Year Course’ for teachers</b></p> <p>One practitioner from Merthyr out of 7 regional places took part in the Welsh in a Year sabbatical course. The practitioner will return to school in September 2023.</p> <p><b>2 term Foundation/Intermediate Course (Autumn 2023 -Spring 2024) *This replaces ‘Welsh in a Year’ from September 2023.</b></p> <p>One practitioner from Merthyr has gained a place on this course from September 2023.</p> <p><b>Leadership of Welsh Programme:</b> (Aimed at English Medium Headteachers and senior leaders)</p> <p>CSC delivers Leadership of Welsh programme designed to support senior leaders to develop the Welsh language and culture on a whole school strategic level.</p> <p>1 delegate from Merthyr attended the programme in Autumn 2022.</p>		
<p>Ensure HR support is effective in meeting the needs of the workforce</p>			
<p>Launch and maintain recruitment and <b>retention</b> campaigns to <b>maintain and</b> attract teachers to Merthyr Tydfil promoting the benefits of living in the heart of the Heads of the Valley and its proximity to</p>			

other areas of South and Mid Wales			
Build on the current training programme to Governors, encouraging further collaboration between governing bodies, particularly within clusters but also specifically across secondary schools.	<p>The Governor Learning Pathways has been introduced to support governors keep up to date with the education agenda and to ensure governors have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, including the systems and structures needed to fulfil these. The Learning Pathway aims to provide a comprehensive range of training, learning, advice and development opportunities. The offer include bespoke focused support, wider learning systems include networks, online approaches through hwb and opportunities to share practice through focused sessions and conferences. The Governors Conference held in July 2023 was attended by all schools and gave governing bodies an opportunity to showcase areas of good practice, as well as to contributed to the next phase of development. The event was very well attended, and feedback indicated that 100% found it to be good or better. Two cluster model approaches have taken place to date, with governing bodies identifying their own needs, as well as areas of good practice. Initial feedback has indicated that the sessions were very good, with governors engaging well in professional dialogue, challenge and support. A series of Hwb training playlists have been developed and are available in the Governors Hwb Platform. This will enable governors to access key basic information in key areas of responsibility on demand. Topics covered to date include complaints, school finance and pupil exclusions. Further topics will be provided over the academic year.</p>		
Agree and implement an <b>Education Workforce Wellbeing Charter</b>	<p>A School staff Wellbeing Charter was developed and sent to schools. This charter has now been reviewed to ensure the areas align with the current climate, the Welsh Government charter and the Whole School Approach Guidance. (pending release)</p>		

## GOAL 3: SUPPORTING LEARNERS HEALTH AND WELLBEING

2021-Summer 2023		2023-2025	2025-2026
PANDEMIC RECOVERY		DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING	REALISING AND EMBEDDING
Develop and promote a clear roadmap of emotional and wellbeing support for families, children and young people, supported by all Local Authority services and wider partners including CTMUHB	The Whole School Approach multi-partnership group is starting to engage in closer and more targeted working to understand the support available to schools and families. Statutory services have been mapped and Hwb playlist of materials and resource developed. A draft roadmap is in construction.		
Introduce a wellbeing tool for children and young people to use to support their own emotional wellbeing	PERMA wellbeing tool has been introduced and is used in 23 schools. User guides and starter packs have been disseminated. The training was found to be very helpful by those who attended. Relationships are the strongest areas of wellbeing identified from the tool, with engagement as in most need (report Spring 2021). Pupils with lower attendance identified accomplishment as an area of need, alongside experiencing negative emotions. There are nearly 800 strategies and resources within the Wellbeing Tool that can be accessed by schools.		
Ensure the Early Help Hub is accessible to all, providing support at the earliest possible moment for those that need it	The Early Help Hub provides a "Front door" to these services. If a family requires more than one service to meet their needs, Early Help and The Barnardo's key working service can provide a "Team Around the Family" response to meet the needs of the whole family. Over the period of April 2022 to September 2023 (18 months), 124 of the families supported main presenting issue was mental health, 49% of all families supported through that period. It's important to note that 142 individuals within these		

	families are open to CAMHS, giving them timely support whilst they wait for specialist health assessment.		
Improve the engagement of schools in both the Healthy Schools Offer and Active Merthyr thus improving opportunities for children and young people to be active and healthy	<p>Greater networking with school PE leads is in place now with the creation of a teacher whatsapp group with Active Merthyr staff. This has allowed for more regular and meaningful communication with information being shared that has supported programmes to develop, or actions to be taken, in a timelier fashion. An example of this is through National Governing Body engagement where regional officers are trying to engage with schools and are unaware of who to speak to. Teachers can be made aware to look out for and engage with emails and Welsh Athletics are the latest beneficiaries of this, booking out taster sessions across numerous schools very quickly as PE leads awaited the incoming information.</p> <p>Every primary school in Merthyr now has a group of yr 6 playground leaders in place, with over 160 young leaders active across the borough. Trained up by Active Merthyr earlier in 2023, every leader was provided with a tshirt and each school has been provided with £100 for leaders to plan and run activities, with resources being sent to PE Leads to support this.</p> <p>A shift in the way schools festivals and competitions has been introduced this year. The Community focused Schools staff have run a range of activities, including some targeted events aimed at girls. One impact from this is that Active Merthyr will now be working with the local football club to help launch a girls session following the programme. As well as this, schools themselves have been supported to organise and run events such as rugby and running. Active Merthyr support varies on need but has included small financial support or workforce engagement. As a result of this more schools are starting to come forward to express an interest in hosting festivals, which in turn will see an increase in opportunities for pupils.</p>		
Provide more opportunities for children, young people and their families to be more physically active	Off the back of the School Sport Survey, several interventions were developed or are being developed across Merthyr to meet the voice of Merthyr students. Basketball featured highly across the borough and was a provision lacking in the area. A new club, Merthyr Mustangs, were		

<p>through a range of partnerships both locally and further afield</p>	<p>supported to launch and are now thriving. The John Sellwood Community Track at Afon Taf school continues to be well used by runners, walkers and cyclists alike.</p>		
<p>Ensure opportunities from Families First activities benefit the widest range of families possible</p>	<p>The Families First programme supports families across the school age and is working in partnership to support a number of successful projects. Examples of these include Integrated counselling, ‘The Exchange’ successfully works with a large number of families (297 during 2021/22), providing on average 1500 each year over the last 3 years. Most participants indicate improvements in key areas such as emotional and mental wellbeing (137 individuals reported improvement during 21/22), resilience and their ability to support their child’s learning and development needs.</p> <p>The Primary Mental Health project worked with 231 families during 21/22 with 178 individuals reporting improvements in their mental/ emotional wellbeing. Barnardos Keyworking, providing a “Team Around the Family” have engaged considerably with families, particularly in 2021-22 (330 families), with many children and young people improving their attendance during this time (60 learners reported improvements during the same period</p>		
<p>Ensure all settings provide effective professional learning opportunities to develop staff who are confident to deliver emotional literacy support to children and young people</p>	<p>The grant received from Welsh Government for the past 3 years has been used to provide a range of support to enable delivery of key areas linked to the Whole School Approach guidance, these include counselling through The Exchange; targeted support for Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA) in schools to evaluate the impact of sessions and attend ELSA Conference to develop their practice; workforce development to support emotional and mental wellbeing including Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA), Resilience in Schools and Education (RISE), Forest Schools Outdoor Learning; Curriculum support through developing early speech and language skills using Wellcomm to enable cultural capital.</p> <p>A borough wide approach, Positive Behaviour Support (PBS), has been adopted to support an ethos that values inclusion. The train the trainer approach provides greater future sustainability. All schools have a named</p>		

	<p>PBS lead to promote and share practice. The Local Authority is the first LA across England and Wales to be recognised as a BILD ACT Certified Organisation. The Prevention Service, within Children’s Services, provides a significant contribution to the WSA through the Children and Young People’s Agenda and has invested in upskilling the workforce through Universal and Targeted approaches such as Nurture UK and Trauma Informed Schools. The Early Help offers information, advice to promote families accessing the right support at the right time. They also offer school liaison and consultation on cases.</p>		
<p>Provide young people with access to services and activities outside of school that support their development as individuals and members of their community</p>	<p>Food and Fun successfully engaged 15 partner schools with 820 free child places. 1-1 support was given to children with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) to ensure participation. There was vast range of sessions which contribute to health and wellbeing including arts and crafts, active play, cooking, nutrition as well as parent/guardian focused sessions. Staff also received training in nutrition and food hygiene. This is an excellent example of partnerships working to meet the emotional and mental wellbeing needs of children, particularly those with vulnerabilities. The Community Focused Schools team are engaged in a range of projects supporting families and community connectivity.</p> <p>The Snakes and Ladders programme has spent the last year talking and listening to the views of young people about their emotional health and their lived experiences of the support available. It presented its findings and young people’s solutions to a range of partners in Merthyr Tydfil in December The project is funded by the Community Fund (Lottery) but any solutions have to be able to be sustainable and are to be evaluated by the University of South Wales. The programme is not focused on the success but on the learning, it can gain to influence future service and system change to make provision more effective</p>		
<p>Maximise the opportunities for children to access outdoor play through</p>	<p>Community Focused Schools (CFS) Capital Funding has been utilised to support school’s physical environment, including outdoor spaces. Two school-based colleagues have been trained at Level 4 to support delivery</p>		

ensuring there are safe outdoor, green spaces	of Forest Schools and other outdoor learning-based approaches across Merthyr Tydfil Schools.		
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## GOAL 4: IMPROVING ACHIEVEMENT AND PROGRESSION

2021- Summer 2023		2023-2025	2025-2006
PANDEMIC RECOVERY		DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING	REALISING AND EMBEDDING
<p>Ensure that all education settings are equipped to develop an innovative curriculum, <b>delivering the CfW in all year groups by 2026, that</b> can be adapted and delivered outside of settings should the need arise</p>	<p>All schools meet the mandatory requirements of the curriculum, governing bodies have formally adopted their curriculum and curriculum summaries have been published. All schools are working within their clusters on 3-16 curriculum approaches and are trialling different approaches. Schools have the opportunity to engage in regional or bespoke programmes of professional learning offered by the regional consortia. For the 2022-2023 academic year, 75 practitioners from Merthyr Tydfil, from across 96% of Merthyr Tydfil schools engaged in regional networks. 14 (74%) Merthyr Tydfil nursery and primary schools, and the all-age school received bespoke support related to curriculum, assessment, teaching and learning. Positive practice has been identified by the Inspectorate in a few schools inspected across the Borough following their work.</p>		
<p><b>Support schools, settings and practitioners to engage with, and gain an understanding of, assessment principles and arrangements and how these can be used to support learner progression.</b></p>	<p>Schools are continuing to develop their approaches to assessing pupil progress against their school curriculum which is identified in around half of school evaluative summaries from the school improvement service. This includes the use of both qualitative and quantitative approaches, with school tracking systems being refined. Pupil progress sessions and listening to feedback from learners, feature heavily across many schools. Standards are identified as at least good in these schools, other than the two schools who are in a statutory category. A range of first-hand evidence supports these evaluations and form part of the</p>		



	schools own monitoring and evaluation cycle, in line with the WG School Improvement guidance.		
Support schools in preparing for the 'Made for Wales' qualifications offer to be introduced in 2025.	UPDATED RARS COMMITMENT 2024		
Ensure that all education settings are equipped to implement the ALNET Act as it is introduced	The Merthyr Tydfil ALNCo Forum is held half termly and is well established as an effective professional learning platform for professional development. 100% of schools now engage with the forum alongside colleagues from Merthyr College, Early Years team, health professionals and SNAP Cymru. All newly appointed ALNCOs participate in the LA induction training programme ensuring a consistent approach to the ALNCo role across the authority and 'shadowing' opportunities are also available. In the 22/23 academic year, all Merthyr Tydfil Primary, Secondary and Special School ALNCOs have attended successful half termly, one day training events, as well as Merthyr College, Early Years and Educational Psychology Service professionals. The effective facilitation of the early years ALNET modules has raised awareness of the ALNET code with early years practitioners, health and education colleagues to ensure all partners are working appropriately towards the delivery. The appointment of the EY ALNLO has strengthened relationships with schools enabling highly effective Team around the child meetings with parental engagement and an earlier admissions notification date. The TAC meetings have provided schools with beneficial information on children's needs and facilitated smooth transitions.		
Ensure the new Welsh in Education Strategic Plan articulates the ambition to further develop the use of Welsh language and culture across the County Borough, supported by all partners	The WESP has been introduced in September 2022 and is making appropriate progress against the objectives. Strong partnership working has been established with a range of stakeholders throughout the Borough, with the Welsh Education Forum and a range of sub-group driving the actions that underpin the strategic plan. A Welsh Language Conference was held in June 2023 with over 60 partners attending, together with the Minister for Education and Welsh Language. This		

	<p>provided valuable time for reflection and collaborative planning. Bids to secure Childcare Offer Capital Grant (COCG) monies for a range of projects is progressing through the Welsh Government business case processes. Funding has been secured for increasing capacity and providing a Learning Resource Base for pupils with ALN. Immersion classes are in place in both WM primary schools. Over 200 children are supported through immersion activities in the schools. The trochi leaders in the school report there are higher levels of confidence, more fluency and willingness to learn. 82.4% (492/597) pupils were entered for Welsh second language GCSE in 2022, with 77.9% entered in 2023. In 2022, 83.8% of pupils left school with a Welsh qualification, whereas 75.4% achieved a qualification in 2023. This is an area for development within the department business improvement plans. Most schools across the County Borough engage well in the Siater Iaith and Cymraeg Campus provision, increasing the opportunities provided to children and young people to engage in Welsh language, culture and history. All Secondary schools and most primary schools have received at least the bronze award. The College, Merthyr Tydfil has received the Cymraeg Campus bronze award. 2 Early Years settings have received Siarter Iaith Cymraeg Campus Award bronze award. A range of community events and opportunities to use Welsh in different contexts across the County Borough has been established and is developing well. These include the very successful Diwrnod Shwmae and Christmas Fair events, as well as cluster Eisteddfodau and a very popular Borough-wide Noson Lawen event, which has grown to over 200 children showcasing Welsh language and culture. In addition, the creation of a Merthyr Song, 'Merthyr Forever,' positively engaged many schools in creating a sense of 'cynefin,' drawing together the rich history, culture and language within Merthyr Tydfil.</p>		
<p>Develop a Merthyr Tydfil Business and Education Together network that supports learners not just</p>	<p>The Business Education Together Partnership is developing appropriately in supporting aspirations across Merthyr Tydfil. A successful bid for Share Prosperity Funding led to the appointment of a Strategic Partnership Co-ordinator. As a result, collaboration and partnership</p>		

<p>to engage with the world of work from the earliest opportunity but also enhances curriculum delivery and offers young people alternative pathways to future education employment and training.</p>	<p>between businesses, organisations and schools is increasing and the work is developing at a greater pace. The core group of the BETP has been strengthened, with the involvement of key organisations and businesses such as Reaching Wider, USW and the Wales Valleys Engineering Lead. This has allowed a wider understanding of what is going on in different areas across the Borough. A new website has been developed to support a 'one stop shop' for information for young people, schools and businesses. The BETP will be officially launched in January 2024, with over 100 schools, businesses and organisations due to attend to develop the next phase of the partnership.</p> <p>Support for the SEAL, the pledges of support, has been successfully gained from 11 from business partners, with 5 pending. An additional 4 schools have also pledged to date. The start of engagement with different LA directorates have taken place including involvement in a recent schools event to enhance pupils' understanding of community and career pathways, as well as some open meetings at Secondary Schools. The Education and Regeneration Directorate continue to work appropriately in different aspects of the pathways. Two clusters have been supported by the partnership to develop curriculum-based approaches, with local and regional employers. The Aspire team within the Regeneration Department have engaged with Secondary Schools for a Lego project competition. The Seren Project, a Social Services, Regeneration and EE project targeted at CLA children has been positive in supporting a small group of vulnerable learners. Further development work with EE, resulting in the 'Ewch Amdani'.</p> <p>A range of activities are planned for the academic year, including a mentoring programme for disadvantaged and disaffected learners, a cluster careers event focused on the importance of bilingualism in the workplace and an event for International Women's Day to raise aspirations of More Able and Talented girls. Additionally, alternative pathways opportunities are being explored for a range of learners.</p>		
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## GOAL 5: DEVELOPING THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

2021- Summer 2023		2023-2025	2025-2026
PANDEMIC RECOVERY		DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING	REALISING AND EMBEDDING
Deliver the Sustainable Communities for Learning programme and seek commitment to a long term plan for future estate improvements	The LA's priorities for investment in the capital programme are aligned to the condition, suitability and sufficiency of schools, other education buildings and relevant planning of school places strategies as detailed within the Learning Service Asset Management Plan (SAMP). This has resulted in the LA having approved match funding over its Medium-Term Financial Plan to finance the £113M Sustainable Communities for Learning (SCfL) programme. The SCfL programme currently includes a major refurbishment of Pen Y Dre High and a new build Goetre Primary both of which will be completed in 2025, and a new build Blessed Carlo Acutis 3-16 school, due for completion in 2026. Completed capital works at Safle'r Gurnos enabling Cylch Meithrin to open in January 2023 and nursery intake to seedling school from April/Sep 2023.		
Ensure the Council's Digital Strategy supports the requirements of the Curriculum for Wales building and acting upon the knowledge of where there is most digital exclusion	A Digital Schools Strategy was approved by Council in January 2023. The strategy is in line with Welsh Government requirements and is based on five core principles. A digital development and learning approach was developed with the digital strategy group and is currently being utilised to support school implementation. Edtech funding has been utilised to support schools with hardware and a sustainability plan put in place to support ongoing developments.		
Develop and implement a	The Community Focused Schools approach, of a three- cluster model was accepted by Council in October 2022. A pilot was rolled out in the North		

Community Focused Schools <b>Strategy in line with new guidance updated in September 2023</b>	Cluster and the overall approach managed by a steering group of Headteachers. All three clusters now have teams in place and the full programme is being rolled out.		
Review the current catchment area for schools and consider whether this is fit for purpose and need	Spring 2024		
Carry out robust evaluation of existing stock to ensure that plans for improvement are based on sound evidence of need	New condition and suitability survey programme of all school buildings being undertaken between April 21 and March 24		
Ensure property services are able to support the delivery of a purposeful maintenance programme	Agreed priority maintenance programme for schools with Property Services for FYs 2022/23 and 2023/24		
Provide greater opportunities for learning outside the classroom.	Community Focused Schools (CFS) Capital Funding has been utilised to support school's physical environment, including outdoor spaces. Two school-based colleagues have been trained at Level 4 to support delivery of Forest Schools and other outdoor learning-based approaches across Merthyr Tydfil Schools.		