

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CABINET: 6TH MARCH, 2017

REFERENCE FROM LEARNING AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: 13TH FEBRUARY, 2017

“ CENTRAL SOUTH CONSORTIUM CONTRIBUTION TO RAISING STANDARDS IN THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN SCHOOLS –

Ms. Hannah Woodhouse, Managing Director of the Central South Consortium (CSC), was present together with Councillor Huw David, Chairman of the Central South Consortium Joint Committee, to present the report.

Ms. Woodhouse commenced by advising that Scrutiny Committees in each of the five Authorities invited the lead officer for the Authority to report on the performance of the schools in their Authority together with contributions from the Consortium at any stage of the year. An Annual Report from the Consortium relating to progress in the previous academic year and the priorities for the year ahead was also provided.

In referring to the CSC's Business Plan for the financial year 2016/17, which could be found on the Consortium's website www.cscjes.org.uk/About-Us, it was stated that the Business Plan included stretching and ambitious targets based on those targets set in each Local Authority whilst also reflecting school target setting. The Business Plan set out how the CSC aimed to deliver the priorities to effective school self-evaluation and improvement planning, underpinned by building capacity in schools to support other schools for the development of the Central South Wales Challenge. Committee was informed that the Consortium's self-evaluation process regularly reviewed the impact of challenge and support and provided an update report to the Advisory Board and Joint Committee.

Of note was the fact that part of the CSC's self-evaluation was drawn from a specific evaluation programme which had been commissioned from Cardiff University and focused on the Central South Wales Challenge Programme to evidence impact over time on capacity in the system beyond the immediate school performance information. Since 2012 it was noted that standards had improved rapidly compared to the national average across the region at every Key Stage. In 2016 the region had continued to show strong improvement and was above the national average at every Key Stage for the first time and had remained above it for the second year in Key Stages 1, 2 and 4.

In March 2016 the Consortium itself was inspected by Estyn where the inspection report recognised progress in establishing clear strategies, vision, delivery of consistent challenge and support as well as partnership working. Three good judgements had been identified for leadership, improving quality and strategic partnerships with two adequate judgements relating to school improvement and use of resources. Committee was reminded that the inspection report had previously

been reported to the Scrutiny Committee detailing progress against the recommendations contained therein.

The Consortium's self-evaluation report was updated on a regular basis and identified a number of areas for improvement for the region as a whole as outlined below:-

- Despite a narrowing of the gap, gaps for vulnerable learners, particularly eFSM learners, were still too wide;
- There was significant underachievement by boys in languages;
- There remained wide variation in secondary outcomes with a small number of very vulnerable secondary schools making progress too slowly;
- More able learners' outcomes were improving but could go further particularly at Key Stage 5 (post 16);
- Leadership capacity in the system and recruitment to core subject teaching posts remained a challenge;
- Challenge Advisors' reporting was improving but judgements regarding teaching and leadership needed to be made more robustly;
- There was evidence to link most school to school working to impact, but more needed to be done to evidence sustainable impact through evaluation and deepen the impact of enquiry led practice at the classroom level;
- There was more to do to build system leadership behaviours from many heads;
- Implementation of performance management needed to be tighter for staff and there was more to do to embed a culture of self-evaluation and business planning in order to evidence value for money;
- There was further work to do with elected Members and Governors to raise awareness and improve co-ordinated scrutiny of the Consortium.

The financial year 2017/18 Business Plan would set out how the organisation would, as far as possible, respond to strategic challenges and address areas for improvement along with the Estyn recommendations through a detailed resourced plan developed with input from schools, staff and Local Authorities.

The final Business Plan for the financial year 17/18 would be presented to the Joint Committee for approval in March 2017. The Plan would have five areas of focus:

1. Improving outcomes for vulnerable learners through effective partnership work with inclusion services;
2. Delivering curriculum reform through school to school working;
3. Improving leadership, governance and workforce reform;
4. Rapid and sustainable intervention;
5. Delivering value for money.

In referring specifically to the Vale of Glamorgan, Scrutiny reports to the Committee had shown that the standards in 2016 were at least good in all Key Stages and over the last three years improvements were evident in all indicators, with good performance at the higher levels and very good progress at Key Stage 3. In comparing performance with other Local Authorities, ranking data demonstrated that

the Vale of Glamorgan performed above its indicative rank position of fifth in most areas. The report highlighted in particular that:

- “At Foundation Phase, despite a slight dip in the percentage of pupils who achieved the Foundation Phase outcome indicator (FPOI), the Vale of Glamorgan’s ranking improved to second for this indicator;
- At Key Stage 2, the percentage of pupils achieving the core subject indicator increased further and remained the second highest when compared to the performance of other Local Authorities;
- At Key Stage 3, the percentage of pupils achieving the core subject indicator increased by 3.8 percentage points and the ranking from fifth to fourth.
- At Key Stage 4 the percentage of pupils achieving 5 GCSE passes at grades A* - C including English / Welsh and mathematics (known as the Level 2 + measure) improved in the Vale of Glamorgan by 2.2 percentage points to 67.1% which was the second highest in Wales. The national average for the L2+ was 60.3%.”

The report also detailed the challenge and support provided by the Consortium on behalf of the Vale of Glamorgan Council and referred to specific support as outlined below:

- “Nine schools were part of pathfinder pairings in the Local Authority. Of the nine, five provided support and four received support. The focus of work was tailored to the needs of each school with support from Challenge Advisors who brokered the partnerships and monitored progress and evaluated the impact;
- Most Vale schools had been involved in School Improvement Group (SIG) working, and during 2015/16 SIGs including Vale schools had focused on literacy, numeracy, teaching and pedagogy, pupil voice, leadership, ICT and digital curriculum framework (DCF) assessment and science. SIGs were reviewed annually and had to provide a report on their priorities and impact against their priorities twice a year in order to be funded;
- Four Vale of Glamorgan schools had engaged in the peer enquiry programme, which supported headteachers working in triads to review and evaluate focus areas in each school and then providing a detailed report on the strengths and areas for improvement;
- The Consortium had invested heavily in leadership provision in the 2015/16 year. This had included opportunities to support another school with leadership capacity or coaching, leadership of school to school provision and direct leadership programmes. Of these, seven headteachers had undertaken the New to Headship Programme; two headteachers had undertaken the Strategic Headship Programme; eight headteachers had completed the Consultant Headship Programme; four secured places on the Headship Now! Programme;
- There had been one Schools Challenge Cymru Advisor in the Vale of Glamorgan and in addition, the Foundation Phase, Welsh in Education, Hwb+ and Qualified for Life teams based in school improvement hubs had also supported Vale schools as part of their grant funded operation;

- Vale of Glamorgan schools involved in providing support as part of the Hub programme included:
 - Romilly Primary, Cadoxton Primary, Rhws Primary, Stanwell School, Cowbridge Comprehensive, Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Morgannwg – Professional Learning Continuum
 - Sully Primary School, Cowbridge Comprehensive– Welsh second language
 - Cadoxton Nursery (now amalgamated with Cadoxton Primary) – Foundation Phase
 - Ysgol Gymraeg Sant Curig, Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Morgannwg – Welsh first language
 - Stanwell School – mathematics
 - Bryn Hafren Comprehensive– Modern Foreign Languages
 - Cadoxton Primary– Digital Competence.

The following schools were identified as Welsh Government Pioneer Schools:

- Romilly Primary, Cadoxton Primary, Rhws Primary, Barry Island Primary, Cowbridge Comprehensive, Stanwell School, Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Morgannwg, Ysgol Gymraeg Sant Curig and Albert Primary.

The following being identified as lead practitioners:

- Stanwell School, Cowbridge Comprehensive, All Saints CiW Primary, Barry Island, St. David's CiW Primary.

In referring to a number of issues which the CSC needed to make faster progress on, Committee was advised of the following:

- Continued focus on the achievement of pupils eligible for free school meals across the region;
- Alignment with Schools Challenge Cymru (SCC). We have a SCC lead in the region and six SCC advisors. We have Accelerated Learning Boards and Improvement plans from all SCC schools, but we need to continue to focus on making sure SCC, the Consortium and the Authority are working together efficiently;
- Analysis of Key Stage 2 and 3 tests had indicated variation of teacher assessment and moderation. The national approach to verification of teacher assessment has been shown to be rigorous and impactful, this would continue to be an area of focus for 2016-2017;
- Continue to work with all Human Resource departments and governor support teams to embed consistency and quality advice for schools regardless of where they were in the region;
- Improved use of information systems across the region through the development of Cronfa as a single point of information for schools, Local Authorities and Consortium colleagues across the region.

Councillor Huw David, the Chairman of the Joint Committee, reiterated that the CSC region had seen the most improvement at every Key Stage for a number of years. He also took the opportunity to congratulate the Vale as the schools in the Vale had been very much in the lead with these improvements, being first, second and third in many of the rankings. In referring to the areas of improvement, he stated that the

Consortium would continue to deliver, identify and address these issues, acknowledging that part of the system was a self-improving system where the answers could be found in the schools and through leadership via headteachers on the front line.

In recognising that the final categorisation of Councils had been published on 31st January, a number of Members requested that the information be sent to all Members. Of note was the fact that within the Vale 43% of schools had been categorised as Green, 41.5% as Yellow, 12% as Amber and 3.5% as Red.

In considering Vale schools, reference was made to the previous Estyn inspections reported to the Committee at the last meeting and the confidential information at the last meeting in relation to Palmerston which had now been released by Estyn. Members stated that they had requested that letters of congratulations be extended to the schools and in particular following the release of the inspection report wished to offer their congratulations to Palmerston who had received excellent results in their Inspection.

The Managing Director of the Consortium then referred to Professor Graham Donaldson's report on successful futures advising that a review had been undertaken of curriculum assessment arrangements in Wales from Foundation Phase to Key Stage 4. The Chairman of the Consortium advised that he would expect every school to have read the document and consider how they themselves were assessing teaching, together with a need for Governors to challenge the school on how they intend achieving the recommendations outlined within the report. Ten schools in the Vale were currently involved in shaping the development of the curriculum with the suggestion being put forward that a presentation on their work be presented to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Committee, it being noted that every school could have the opportunity to benefit from learning experiences that could be afforded from such work.

The Interim Director of Learning and Skills advised that as a result of a change to the content and assessment of certain GCSEs, secondary schools were finding it difficult to set targets in some subject areas. Although progress at Key Stage 4 had been good over the last four years, the same linear progression could not be expected in the summer. It was important to recognise that each school should be looked at in an individual context and then benchmarked against other similar schools.

Following a comment from a Member as to whether assistance was being afforded to teachers to encourage their development into future headteacher positions the Chairman of the Joint Committee advised that a programme had commenced whereby the Consortium provides support and skills training to teachers in particular, to newly appointed headteachers. It was imperative that proper support was provided although it was noted that more could be done. Welsh Government had also recognised the issue was a problem across the whole of Wales and that the pool needed to grow in order to ensure there were headteachers for the future with the right skills. The Leadership Academy announced by the Minister Kirsty Williams was designed to learn from regions, with the hope that every school would be able to identify future leaders within the school and mechanisms put in place to develop them from within.

In response to a query from the Chairman as to whether any further work had been undertaken in relation to ensuring a number of schools obtain the right levels of support, the Lead Officer for School Improvement advised that a number of days were offered in line with the national model, but the important factor was to ensure that the category was right from the outset. Although acknowledging that the categorisation system determined the level of support, the Chairman of the Consortium stated that, in his view, the system should be more flexible and be able to respond to changes throughout the year. The Lead Officer confirmed that although up to ten days could be provided of the Challenge Advisor's time, additional support could also be given and that there was a significant menu of support that could be used for schools. The Interim Director confirmed that across the region they would be looking to review the number of days allocated to each category of school ahead of a Welsh Government review of the national model. The work of the CSC in this area could influence this aspect of the national model.

The Chairman took the opportunity to thank Ms. Hannah Woodhouse and Councillor David for their attendance and to wish the Managing Director all the best in the future as she was leaving the Consortium for pastures new.

Having considered the report, the presentation and the evidence presented, it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the performance across the Central South region in 2016 be noted.
- (2) T H A T letters of congratulation on behalf of the Committee be sent to schools identified as Green and those most improved.
- (3) T H A T, notwithstanding the letters to be sent to schools agreed at the previous meeting, a letter be also sent to Palmerston School in recognition of the excellent inspection report received.
- (4) T H A T the Scrutiny Committee receives a report at a future meeting in respect of the Donaldson Review.
- (5) T H A T the Consortium report be referred to Cabinet for consideration and stressing the need to ensure that all schools consider the implications of the Donaldson Report.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) To ensure Members are aware of performance of the Vale of Glamorgan in relation to the role of the Central South Consortium and to note the challenge and support provided by the Central South Consortium on behalf of the Vale of Glamorgan Directorate of Learning and Skills.
- (2&3) To offer the Committee's congratulations to the schools.

(4) To apprise Members.

(5) To advise Cabinet of performance to date and the implications of the Donaldson Review.”

Attached as Appendix - Report to Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee: 13th February, 2017