

Meeting of:	Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	Thursday, 13 January 2022
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Learning and Culture
Report Title:	The Impact of COVID-19 on pupils' literacy skills in the Vale of Glamorgan
Purpose of Report:	To update Members on the impact of COVID-19 on pupils' literacy skills in the Vale of Glamorgan and Central South Consortium's literacy strategy.
Report Owner:	Paula Ham, Director of Learning and Skills
Responsible Officer:	Carys Pritchard, Principal Improvement Partner Cath Billington-Richards, Strategic Lead for Languages, Literacy and Communication
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	Councillor Lis Burnett, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration
Policy Framework:	The recommendations of this report are within existing policy framework and budget.
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The report (Appendix A) provides an overview from the Central South Consortium (CSC) of how the coronavirus pandemic has impacted on pupils' literacy skills in schools across the Vale of Glamorgan. It considers how schools are actively addressing the impact on pupils' literacy through the identification of priorities in school development plans, and their use of the Welsh Government's Recruit, Recover, Raise Standards (RRRS): Accelerating Learning Programme grant. In addition, the report outlines CSC's literacy strategy, as well as the professional learning offer currently available for schools to support literacy development. The report features examples of practice from schools across the Vale of Glamorgan. This is to exemplify points raised in the report and to give a flavour of the work that has taken place in schools across the Local Authority. 	

Recommendations

1. That Members consider the findings of the report regarding the impact of COVID-19 on pupils' literacy skills in the Vale of Glamorgan.
2. That Members recognise the ongoing strategic work undertaken by schools to actively address the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on pupils' literacy skills.
3. That Members consider the support available to schools to support their literacy development through the CSC Literacy Strategy and the professional offer programme.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. To advise Members of how the global pandemic caused by COVID-19 has impacted on pupils' literacy skills in schools across the Vale of Glamorgan.
2. To share with Members how schools are currently focussing on literacy development as part of their school development plan priorities, use of the RRRS grant, and attendance at CSC professional learning programmes.
3. To advise Members of the CSC literacy strategy and the professional learning programme available to schools to support with literacy development.

1. Background

- 1.1 The report attached at Appendix A, outlines the impact of the global pandemic on pupils' oracy, reading and writing in both English and Welsh. It provides examples of how schools have prioritised literacy as part of the school development plans for this academic year, and how schools are using the RRRS grant to support literacy development. In addition, the report outlines CSC's literacy strategy and the professional learning offer currently available for schools to support literacy development.
- 1.2 The content of the report is based on:
 - discussions undertaken between Improvement Partners from CSC and school leaders and staff;
 - discussions undertaken between members of the Languages, Literacy and Communication strategic team in CSC and school staff during visits, professional learning activities and network meetings;
 - discussions undertaken between Welsh in Education officers from CSC and Welsh subject leads during meetings, professional learning, and network meetings;
 - scrutiny of school development plans; and

- scrutiny of schools' use of the Recruit, Recover, Raise Standards: The Accelerating Learning Programme grant

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1** Schools across the Vale of Glamorgan are reporting that the coronavirus pandemic has impacted on pupils' literacy skills. Primary and secondary school colleagues are commenting that many pupils are not currently at the expected development stage, and that pupils' literacy skills have regressed. However, there is not a consistent picture across the Local Authority, with variability in pupils' oracy, reading and writing skills both within and across schools.
- 2.2** Due to the impact of COVID-19 on pupils' literacy skills, there is a strong focus on literacy in schools' development plans for 2021-22. One of the foci for CSC Improvement Partners during this academic year is to support schools in monitoring progress in relation to priorities in the school development plan. This will ensure a regular focus on the work of schools in addressing the impact of COVID-19 on pupils' literacy skills.
- 2.3** Many schools across the Vale of Glamorgan are using part of their Recruit, Recover, Raise Standards: The Accelerating Learning Programme grant to support pupils' literacy skills. This funding is being used to employ additional staff, or to enable staff to provide literacy interventions, catch up and targeted support for pupils.
- 2.4** The report outlines the CSC literacy strategy, the professional learning programme available to all schools, and the additional support provided for Welsh medium schools to support literacy development. Further work will be undertaken by the CSC Literacy team throughout this academic year to capture the impact of this professional learning programme.

3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

- 3.1** The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 ("the 2015 Act") requires the Council to think about the long-term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities and each other and to prevent persistent problems such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change.
- 3.2** Support for learners contributes to the Council's Wellbeing Objectives drawn from the Corporate Plan 2020-25. There is specific alignment with our wellbeing objectives to work with and for our communities and to support learning, employment and sustainable economic growth.

- 3.3** This report recognises the range of approaches developed by schools to address the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on pupils' literacy skills and the approaches being taken by schools to minimise and actively address that impact.

4. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 4.1** There are no financial implications resulting from this report.

Employment

- 4.2** There are no employment implications resulting from this report.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 4.3** There are no legal implications resulting from this report.

5. Background Papers

None.

The impact of COVID-19 on pupils' literacy skills in the Vale of Glamorgan

Central South Consortium Update

November 2021

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Background

1. The global pandemic caused by COVID-19 has had a significant impact on learning and teaching in schools. This report provides an overview of how the coronavirus pandemic has impacted on pupils' literacy skills in schools across the Vale of Glamorgan. It considers how schools are actively addressing the impact on pupils' literacy through the identification of priorities in school development plans, and their use of the Recruit, Recover, Raise Standards: Accelerating Learning Programme grant (the RRRS grant). In addition, the report outlines Central South Consortium's (CSC's) literacy strategy, as well as the professional learning offer currently available for schools to support literacy development.
2. The findings in this report are based on:
 - discussions undertaken between Improvement Partners from CSC and school leaders and staff
 - discussions undertaken between members of the Languages, Literacy and Communication strategic team in CSC and school staff during visits, professional learning activities and network meetings
 - discussions undertaken between Welsh in Education Officers from CSC and Welsh subject leads during meetings, professional learning, and network meetings
 - scrutiny of school development plans
 - scrutiny of schools' use of the Recruit, Recover, Raise Standards: The Accelerating Learning Programme grant
3. The report features examples of practice from schools across the Vale of Glamorgan. This is to exemplify points raised in the report and to give a flavour of the work that has taken place in schools across the local authority.

Impact of COVID-19 on pupils' literacy skills

4. Schools across the Vale of Glamorgan are reporting that the coronavirus pandemic has impacted on pupils' literacy skills. Primary and secondary school colleagues are commenting that many pupils are not currently at the expected development stage, and that pupils' language skills have regressed. However, there is not a consistent picture across the local authority, with variability in pupils' oracy, reading and writing skills both within and across schools.
5. Leaders and staff in nearly all schools have undertaken appropriate baseline assessments and specific literacy tests. As a result, schools have a comprehensive picture of where pupils are in their literacy development and have identified clear next steps for individuals and specific cohorts.
6. During the 2021 summer term, the national reading tests were available for schools to use on a 'best endeavours' basis. Several schools engaged with the reading tests for diagnostic purposes; however, standardised scores from these tests have not yet been shared with schools.

7. Welsh Government suspended the statutory data collection and publications of performance measures for 2019-20 and 2021-22 academic years due to the coronavirus pandemic. In addition, the 'School improvement guidance – framework for evaluation, improvement and accountability'¹ emphasises that the purpose of assessment is to support individual learner progress and that assessment information should not be used for accountability purposes. As a result, no data is available to compare pupils' literacy skills on a local, regional or national level. It is important to note that information from schools' assessment arrangements and analysis of external examinations data should continue to inform school self-evaluation arrangements and lead improvement in teaching and learning. Improvement partners are supporting school to use the data for improvement purposes.

Oracy

8. Nearly all primary schools report that pupils, particularly those in the foundation phase, haven't experienced the usual socialising and interaction with others; as a result, they feel that pupils' confidence in talking with others has been impacted. This is also true of older primary and secondary pupils, as school leaders note that pupils' oral fluency and social skills have regressed. Since returning to school, many leaders report that strong progress has been made in developing pupils' oracy skills. The ability for pupils to collaborate and to be more tolerant when socialising and interacting is a continued focus in schools.
9. Many primary schools have commented that the level of pupils' oracy skills on entry to Nursery and Reception is now lower; this is reflected in the baseline information that is collated in the initial weeks of pupils starting school.
10. Many secondary schools report that pupils are more reluctant to speak in class following the lockdowns. They also report that the quality of speech is weaker and more reliant on dialect phrases and informal expression. Primary and secondary schools have reported that the fluency and use of standard English in the most deprived areas has also declined.
11. Many schools have reported that the word gap has increased over the lockdown period, with this being most acutely felt in areas of deprivation. In the early years this impacts on oracy standards with pupils not having the words, phrases and sentence patterns to communicate orally. The word gap is known to increase as pupils travel through school as having a limited vocabulary impacts your ability to learn and retain new words. As a pupil travels through school this will become evident not only through oracy but also with regards to reading and writing.

¹ <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2021-01/210126-school-improvement-guidance-framework-for-evaluation-improvement-accountability.pdf>

CSC developed the professional learning programme 'Words Matter' to support practitioners and schools to develop a consistent and robust methodology to systematically develop vocabulary. **St Cyres School** engaged well with this professional learning and developed a whole school approach to the delivery of vocabulary using 'Star Word' proformas, knowledge organisers and subject specific toolkits.² The early impact from the school indicates that pupils are now making links between the subjects where common vocabulary is taught. Having clear definitions in use across subjects ensures clarity for pupils.

12. All Welsh medium schools report an element of regression in pupils' Welsh oracy skills, particularly in cases of pupils from non-Welsh speaking homes. Pupils' fluency and confidence when speaking the language have been impacted; however, in the majority of cases, particularly for older pupils in the primary sector and secondary pupils, this has proved to be short-term. On return to school, immersing pupils in the language and revisiting language drilling patterns have proved successful. In a few cases, particularly with younger pupils in the foundation phase, more intensive support is ongoing to reacquaint pupils with the language. All Welsh medium schools in the Vale of Glamorgan are actively engaging in promoting the informal use of Welsh outside the classroom, and this is proving beneficial in pupils' gaining further confidence in speaking Welsh.

Reading

13. There is more variation in the impact reported on pupils' reading skills.

14. Many primary schools have noted that pupils' phonic development isn't as secure in the foundation phase, particularly in Years 1 and 2. This has led to some schools revisiting, adapting, and expanding the use of their phonic scheme to include pupils in lower key stage 2.

Ysgol Sant Curig use the 'Tric a Chlic' phonic programme to support reading in Welsh. Historically, this programme has been introduced successfully in Reception and continued until Year 1. By the end of Year 1, most pupils demonstrate sound phonic development. On the return to school in September 2020, the school were aware that the phonic development of pupils in Years 1 and 2 was less secure. This led to the introduction of the 'Tric a Chlic' programme with Years 2 and 3.

15. Teachers are reporting that the gap in pupils' reading skills are now wider than they were prior to the pandemic. The better and more confident readers have continued to make progress, but the pupils who were struggling and

² Knowledge organisers - a two column document which contains key vocabulary, facts and information relating to a topic or unit of work

those with additional learning needs have either regressed or made little progress. As a result, a majority of schools are identifying that there is a more significant gap in pupils' reading ages across year groups. This is particularly true in schools with a higher number of pupils eligible for free school meals (eFSM) and with a number of pupils with additional learning needs.

16. A few schools report that the pandemic has had very little impact on reading and note that pupils, including those with additional learning needs, have made appropriate progress over the last few months. This is particularly the case with schools that provided a strong and regular focus on reading as part of their remote learning provision.

During the second lockdown period (Spring 2021) **Ysgol Sant Baruc** provided at least three live teaching sessions daily that include a focus on language, mathematic and thematic work. As part of this provision, there was also a live daily reading session, with pupils working in small groups online with their class teacher or with a learning support assistant. Bespoke online intervention sessions for reading also continued online for targeted pupils. School data demonstrates that most pupils made strong progress in their reading.

Jenner Park Primary has a learning resource base class that cater for pupils with complex needs. During the second lockdown there was a comprehensive programme of daily remote learning provision available for pupils at the resource base; this included a mixture of live and pre-recorded sessions. Provision was skilfully differentiated by staff to meet pupils' bespoke needs. There was a strong focus on reading as part of the provision. This included regular opportunities for staff to read with pupils, recorded video stories, and beneficial support and resources for parents and carers to read with their children. As a result, pupils engaged very well with the provision and most made appropriate progress in their reading.

Since September 2020, there has been a strong focus on the provision for reading in **St Athan Primary**. This has included:

- Undertaking an adapted baseline test for pupils on their return to school post lockdown and reviewing and refining the tracking of progress in reading
- Regular professional learning opportunities for staff on reading
- Providing update training for staff on key reading interventions
- Further strengthening home links through introducing parent / carers support packs, online and face to face sessions to develop support for reading at home, and reading cafes to show how parents / carers can support
- Ensuring all pupils were confident in the use of Giglets (online reading platform) in readiness for a second lockdown

- Ensuring a strong focus on reading in school e.g., diverse reading materials introduced to enrich reading opportunities and focus weeks on reading skills across the curriculum.

As a result, school analysis of reading data demonstrates that nearly all pupils have made progress in their reading, with a majority of pupils making strong progress based on the baseline after lockdown and therefore catching up from the impact of COVID-19. Where individual pupils haven't made expected progress, the school has explored the reasons why this is the case.

During the summer term 2021 **St Cyres School** worked closely with CSC to develop a consistent departmental approach to the delivery of reading. The use of these consistent approaches is also being cascaded across the school and is impacting positively on the teaching of reading within English.

The training has specifically influenced English curriculum design with there now being a schema map in places which focuses on progression and sequencing of reading texts - directly influenced by the session on text complexity. The school has incorporated the reading into classroom-based practice and pupils have increased the fluency and accuracy of reading as a result.

This video exemplifies approach called 'Control the Game' which is designed to develop fluency and expression in reading. Here you will see a Year 9 SEN group tackling a challenging text (JFK speech) and responding to questions linked to the text.

<https://youtu.be/UluyKmYcki8>

This second clip exemplifies the same strategy used with year 7 pupils- exploring a linked non-fiction text to the class reader 'Wonder'. Here you are also seeing another strategy in use- the teachers is using knowledge building and embedding non-fiction to support comprehension.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cnc5F1lucaQ>

You will also notice that the school is collating a bank of teaching videos to be used as a staff development tool- being able to see the strategies being used within their own context. This is developing the capacity of the school to be self-improving over time.

St Cyres is working as a lead practitioner in this area for CSC to share and disseminate the effective practice across the region.

Writing

17. The majority of primary schools report that the literacy component most impacted by the pandemic has been writing.
18. During lockdown, pupils were not always accessing or experiencing the lead up and the preparation to the main writing task. This was particularly the case

during the first lockdown in spring and summer term 2020 when most of the provision was paper based.

19. Schools report that parents and carers did not feel as comfortable in supporting the writing process; they were more familiar and comfortable in supporting the reading process. As a result, assistance was not always available for pupils at home to support them with the writing process.
20. In the majority of schools, particularly during the second lockdown, there was a stronger focus on supporting the lead-up to the writing; however, this was often the area of weakest engagement by pupils.
21. In Nursery and Reception, pupils did not always have opportunities during lockdown to practise and develop their fine and gross motor control to underpin the writing processes. As a result, pupils do not have the essential muscle development in their hands and arms to successfully manipulate a variety of instruments to draw, mark, write or form letters correctly. In addition, the lack of gross motor development affects their core stability, sometimes hindering pupils' ability to sit in an upright position at a table for a length of time in order to write.
22. Both primary and secondary schools report that due to the online nature of provision during lockdown, pupils have regressed in their writing stamina, resilience and technical accuracy. School leaders comment that pupils are finding it difficult to write for long periods of time. As pupils are now more proficient in using the keyboard, schools are also reporting that the standard of pupils' handwriting skills has declined.
23. In November 2020, the CSC regional comparative judgement³ pilot told us the following:
 - Out of the schools who took part, the average writing age for Year 3 was 7y 2m against a national UK average of 8Y.
 - Out of the schools who took part, the average writing age for Year 5 was 8y 5m against a national UK average of 8y8m.
 - Out of schools who took part, the average writing age for the inherited Year 7s was 9y7m, against the national UK average which was 10y1m.

Feedback from Vale of Glamorgan schools indicated that this process has helped them refine and develop their provision for writing.

St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary stated that:

³ CSC funded 39 schools to participate in a comparative judgement pilot. The schools were largely representative of the region as a whole with 13 secondary schools and 26 primary schools. The project was deemed successful by the schools involved and subsequently we have offered funding for schools to register again this year. Over 120 schools are now engaged in this work with reports coming on secondary standards 22/10/21 and primary schools' reports across the year. Nine Vale of Glamorgan schools have taken up this offer

As a result of participating, we have implemented specific writing interventions to target those pupils who are writing below the expected standard. We have also considered how to improve our general class teaching provision as a result of the reflection proforma created by teachers as part of the judging process. Our experiences have been shared with the Governing Body and with the CSC Comparative Judgement Pilot project practitioners. We have also presented our 'Teaching Writing Explicitly' journey as part of the CSC playlist. The lessons that we learn from the project will inform changes to our writing provision across the school. For example, we have begun to use The Writing Revolution within our Domain planning.

Whitmore High stated that:

We felt that basic skills were a concern however, we had not realised that run on sentences were quite so prevalent, and that paragraphing and sentence construction were in need of development. Since participating we have gone back to basics and have edited schemes of work in both KS3 & KS4 to focus on sentence construction and variety, in a bid to combat run-on sentences. This has been really effective and has also had an impact on pupils' ability to write engagingly with more accuracy.

Both schools are now working as lead practitioners in this area for CSC to share and disseminate the effective practice across the region.

24. Regional progress data for the Comparative Judgement project for 2021 demonstrates that schools across the region have narrowed the performance gap in relation to the rest of the UK.

School Development Plan Priorities for 2021-2022

25. Due to the impact of COVID-19 on pupils' literacy skills, there is a strong focus on literacy in schools' development plans for 2021-22. The majority of schools in the Vale of Glamorgan make a direct reference to improving aspects of literacy as part of their priorities.
26. The types of priorities that schools have identified include:
- Maintaining and raising standards in literacy
 - Improving pupils' skills with a specific reference to oracy, reading or writing
 - Enhancing opportunities for cross curricular literacy work
 - Minimising the impact of COVID-19 on pupils' literacy skills
 - Introducing or revisiting an intervention programmes to support pupils' literacy skills
 - Improving aspects of differentiation in terms of literacy provision, particularly in relation to a focus on teaching and learning or the introduction of the new ALN Act
 - Developing further strategies to support Welsh language acquisition and immersion.

Ysgol Dewi Sant are focussing on improving pupils' reading and writing skills as they feel that COVID-19 has impacted on standards in both areas. The range of activities planned include:

- Establishing a baseline of pupils' reading and writing skills
- Identifying appropriate intervention programmes for targeted pupils
- Re-establishing the Reading Carousel on a daily basis, with a wide range of strategies in place to promote reading ⁴
- Providing weekly opportunities in place for pupils to read with an adult
- Enhancing provision for Group Guided Reading ⁵
- Ensuring regular sessions for grammar and punctuation
- Providing staff with professional learning on 'Pie Corbet' strategies to support the implementation of the strategy across the school.
- Ensuring regular opportunities for staff to observe each other and to share effective practice, particularly in relation to the Reading Carousel, Group Guided Reading and use of the Pie Corbet strategies.

Pendoylan Church in Wales Primary are continuing to focus on raising the standards of literacy. There is a strong focus on providing appropriate intervention and support for those who require additional support following lockdown. The school are using a new 'Language and Literacy' resource to support the teaching of grammar and providing 'Read Write Inc' intervention for pupils who need support with reading in Years 2-6.

Gladstone Primary are focussing on developing the reading skills of their most vulnerable learners, including eFSM pupils. This is the group of learners that the school has identified as being most impacted by the effects of the pandemic. The range of activities planned include:

- Using the Giglets online reading platform to enable pupils across all age ranges to access reading resources
- Engaging in the CSC professional learning programme 'Reading Reconsidered' and ensuring that key messages regarding developing rigour, insight and precision in reading are shared with all staff
- Establishing Group Guided Reading sessions.

St Helen's Roman Catholic Primary are focussing on improving standards further in literacy. The range of activities planned include:

⁴ Reading carousel is when the class is divided into five reading groups, organised by ability. The teacher then plans one teacher led activity and four independent activities.

⁵ Group Guided Reading is an instructional approach that involves a teacher working with a small group of students who demonstrate similar reading behaviours and can read similar levels of texts

- Providing professional learning opportunities for staff on Voice 21 and to embed the programme in practice across the school
- Updating reading materials across the school to collate resources that develop pupils' enjoyment in reading
- Engaging in the CSC Comparative Judgement Project to develop teachers' understanding of the next steps in supporting children in their writing.
- Delivering the 'Talk for Writing' approach to support pupils' writing process.
- Monitoring the progress and impact of the specialist teacher provision on individuals and groups of pupils.

Wick and Marcross Church in Wales Primary are keen to focus this academic year on early literacy and reading following the impact of COVID-19. Activities planned to support this work include:

- Review and analysis of data from summer term
- Professional learning for staff on key literacy programmes and strategies to support Group Guided Reading.
- Modelled lessons for each speed sound available on Google Drive
- Time for discreet teaching of reading timetabled into the school day
- Family workshop to share strategies for phonics teaching
- Home learning routines re-established to support learning from school at home
- Pupils in need of additional support identified, with timetable of support in place and progress monitored carefully.

St Cyres School had an Estyn recommendation following their inspection in January 2020, to "Raise standards including pupils' literacy and numeracy skills". The school reviewed the provision that was in place and made the following changes which are having a positive impact on improving pupils' literacy skills:

- a focus on active reading and developing a wider vocabulary in context is improving learners' understanding of texts and narratives.
- the use of Knowledge Organisers which help learners to use appropriate subject specific vocabulary in context
- the professional learning grant has been utilised to improve teachers' skills in literacy, ensuring that teachers are confident in assessing and making accurate judgements about pupil progress
- the Pupil Learning Review Cycle focuses on progression in Literacy across the curriculum
- review of the whole school marking strategy to include consistency in marking for Literacy
- introduction of revised book scrutiny procedures to include Literacy lead.

These changes have led to more pupils:

- developing ideas on how to extend their pieces of writing using sentences and paragraphs appropriately

- producing extended pieces of writing that are at least in line with their ability, and there are examples of outstanding writing across the curriculum.
- improving the quality of their work through the process of drafting and re-drafting in response to teacher feedback.

Use of the Recruit, Recover, Raise Standards: The Accelerating Learning Programme grant

27. In June 2020, the Welsh Government announced additional funding of £29 million to schools to support learners from September 2020 onwards. The focus of this additional funding were groups of learners who were impacted more seriously than others by the pandemic. In July 2020, additional funding was provided for Post-16 learners. The grant enabled schools to recruit and deploy additional staff to support and address the needs of learners. Additional funding has also been received by schools in readiness for the current academic year.
28. Many schools across the Vale of Glamorgan are using part of their RRRS grant to support pupils' literacy skills. This funding is being used to employ additional staff, or to enable staff to provide literacy interventions, catch up and targeted support for pupils. A range of literacy intervention programmes are being used in schools; for example, Read Write Inc, Rapid Reading, Launch the Lifeboat Read and Spell scheme. In nearly all cases, these are interventions that were being used in schools already.
29. In many primary schools, the RRRS grant is being to support a range of pupils across different age ranges. A few schools are using the funding to provide targeted support for literacy in Years 2 and 3.
30. All secondary schools are using part of their allocated funding to support the literacy skills of pupils, with a particular focus on supporting pupils in Year 11. There is a strong focus on developing pupils' skills in literacy, in providing additional support for English and delivering interventions and catch-up sessions to address any deficits in learning.
31. All Welsh medium schools in the Vale of Glamorgan are using part of their funding to support the development of pupils' Welsh oracy, with a few also focussing on reading.

The RRRS grant at **Palmerston Primary** has been utilised effectively to support learners across the school to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. There is evidence that focussed and bespoke support, for example in reading at key stage 2, has ensured that the majority of pupils have made accelerated progress (at least one year in their reading ages), despite periods of lockdown and disruption due to the pandemic.

CSC literacy strategy: Languages, Literacy and Communication

“The Languages, Literacy and Communication Area of Learning and Experience (Area) addresses fundamental aspects of human communication. It aims to support learning across the whole curriculum and to enable learners to gain knowledge and skills in Welsh, English and international languages as well as in literature.”

- 32.** Languages, literacy, and communication underpin and mediate all aspects of the curriculum. If we want to provide our pupils, especially those from vulnerable backgrounds, with equal - opportunities and improve their life chances on the world stage, we need to ensure that we provide them with the tools to be able to communicate effectively and competently.
- 33.** We believe that strong literacy skills are fundamental to helping learners to become healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society as the skills promoted through languages, literacy and communication are key to enabling learners to express themselves effectively, to be open to other people’s points of view and to develop positive relationships.
- 34.** To meet these aims, CSC will provide professional learning and networking that is:
 - applicable to Welsh medium and English medium schools
 - based firmly on quality-first teaching and learning, with programmes that support the development of effective pedagogy
 - evidence-based and research-informed to ensure that professional learning is firmly centred on valid and reliable approaches to improving pedagogy

CSC Strategy for the development of:

Oracy

- 35.** Explicitly teaching oracy ensures that pupils view speaking and writing as inextricably linked. Pupils who express themselves will see improvements in their academic ability, potential and well-being. Much like good literacy and numeracy, good oracy is achieved through teaching and cultivating a set of core skills.
- 36.** CSC continues to invest heavily into training and support for the teaching of oracy to ensure that practitioners have a robust understanding of how to adapt and develop their pedagogical approach to ensure effective development of oracy.
- 37.** We believe that schools are the ‘only second chance for some pupils to have a rich language experience’ and that oracy should therefore be an explicit aim of teaching rather than a by-product of teaching. To meet this aim we advocate for the teaching of oral grammar, modelling of and high expectations

for quality oracy and interactions, the use of purpose, structure, strategic use of scaffolds and reflection and metacognition.

38. To achieve these aims we will:

- Provide professional learning opportunities for the explicit teaching of oracy
- Build capacity in the region through the funding of regional oracy hubs.
- Provide bespoke support and coaching for schools to embed oracy in a meaningful and systematic manner
- Share effective practice, teaching models and strategic planning from the region and beyond.

Reading

39. A reading curriculum is made up of all the reading experiences pupils encounter across the curriculum. We believe that building progression into a reading curriculum is vital to develop reading fluency, confidence, and resilience. Alongside progression it is vital to map out the sequencing of texts and how this can develop schema and knowledge needed for progression in the 3-16 curriculum.

40. CSC believes that for the teaching of reading to be effective, schools should have a clearly defined strategy that includes whole school 'non-negotiables' setting out how and when learners are taught reading and the experiences they should have.

41. Effective provision for reading will incorporate daily active practise, high quality ambitious texts, and a range of evidence based pedagogical approaches

42. To meet these aims, CSC will:

- Provide professional learning for the teaching of early reading to through to text comprehension
- Develop the capacity of the region through the extensive delivery of evidence based intensive training programmes
- Provide bespoke support and coaching for schools to develop a rigorous reading curriculum
- Share effective practice, teaching models and strategic planning from the region and beyond.

Writing

43. Writing is arguably one of the most cognitively complex tasks we can ask pupils to do. Not only must they construct the content but also consider all the constituent parts of technically accurate writing.

44. We know that regionally writing is the weakest performing attainment target within the domain of English. Our research and evidence tell us that pupils struggle with the ability to write in coherent sentences and that schools sometimes mistake the assigning of writing tasks with the teaching of writing.
45. As with oracy and reading we believe that effective provision for writing will incorporate explicit and repeated instruction to master and consolidate technically accurate writing. Writing should be taught through the subject knowledge -embedded in the content, not taught in isolation or as a skill. We advocate that writing is everyone's responsibility - it mediates the curriculum and is cross-phase and cross-domain.
46. To meet these aims, CSC will:
- Provide professional learning for the explicit teaching of writing
 - Develop the capacity of the region through the extensive delivery of evidence based intensive training programmes
 - Provide bespoke support and coaching for schools to develop a rigorous writing curriculum
 - Share effective practice, teaching models and strategic planning from the region and beyond
47. **Appendix 1** provides an overview of externally delivered professional learning programmes that are available through CSC. **Appendix 2** outlines the engagement figures for Vale of Glamorgan schools in CSC's literacy professional learning programmes for 2021-22.

Additional literacy support for Welsh medium schools

48. In addition to the areas noted above for Languages, Literacy and Communication, the Welsh in Education Officers at CSC are working closely with Welsh medium schools in the Vale of Glamorgan to support pupils' literacy development.
49. Over the last few years, support has been given to all schools in the Vale of Glamorgan to promote and increase learners' use of Welsh in school and in social contexts. This has been done through the Welsh Language Charter (Siarter Iaith).⁶ The Siarter Iaith was re-launched across the region in May 2021 with most schools taking part in a variety of activities to promote the informal use of Welsh. Following this re-launch, all Welsh medium schools in the Vale have re-engaged with the Siarter Iaith initiative, with activities proving beneficial to pupils gaining further confidence in speaking Welsh.

⁶ Further information about the Welsh Language Charter can be found here: <https://gov.wales/cymraeg-education/schools/welsh-language-charter>

Ysgol Pen y Garth held several different activities to promote the informal use of Welsh including a successful challenge for pupils and parents / carers to learn Welsh through the use of 'Duolingo', a virtual workshop with Bardd Plant Cymru (Welsh-language Children's Laureate), and a combined art project with Victoria Primary and a Welsh artist to support the creation of resources.

Pupils from **Ysgol Gwaun y Nant** worked with Oak Field Primary to support their 'Criw Cymraeg' with words and phrases that they could use in the Big Bocs Bwyd shop and café.

Ysgol Sant Curig hosted a 'Seren and Sbarc' day to celebrate and promote the importance of Welsh across the school. A range of activities took place including the creations of Welsh jigsaws, videos from Year 4 pupils to share with younger pupils in Year 2, and the creation of lip sync videos to Welsh songs.

50. All Welsh medium primary schools in the Vale of Glamorgan have received a Welsh Immersion Resource pack to support their provision for latecomers to Welsh Medium education. The resource is also suitable to use with pupils whose literacy skills in Welsh has been impacted due to COVID-19. A professional learning event to support schools in developing language acquisition was offered to all schools. Around half of Welsh medium schools in the region attended, including three Welsh medium primaries from the Vale of Glamorgan.

Ysgol Sant Curig have identified the need to improve pupils' speaking and listening skills in Welsh following lockdown as well as to further develop teachers' confidence and skills in supporting language acquisition. Professional learning for all staff has been undertaken at the start of the academic year based on best practice in language acquisition and the recent Estyn thematic report on Welsh language acquisition.⁷ A series of activities to support language development has been created by the school which are based on the new CSC Welsh Language Immersion resource. Activities will be introduced daily across the school during the first half of the autumn term 2021 with the progress of pupils monitored carefully. Staff will also have the opportunity to observe each other and share effective practice on language immersion strategies.

Central South Consortium current foci and next steps

⁷ <https://www.estyn.gov.wales/system/files/2021-08/Estyn%20Welsh%20language%20acquisition%20E%2810%29.pdf>

- 51.** One of the foci for CSC Improvement Partners during this academic year is to support schools in monitoring progress in relation to priorities in the school development plan. This will ensure a regular focus on the work of schools in addressing the impact of COVID-19 on pupils' literacy skills.
- 52.** CSC Improvement Partners are also discussing the use and impact of the RRRS grant with school leaders; this will continue the focus on specific groups of pupils who have been impacted most by COVID-19.
- 53.** The CSC professional learning programme to support literacy is ongoing. Further work will be undertaken by the CSC Literacy team throughout this academic year to capture the impact of this professional learning.
- 54.** Members of the Welsh in Education Team are continuing to provide literacy support to Welsh medium schools. Development work is ongoing in relation to the creation of a Welsh Immersion Resource pack to support provision for latecomers to the Welsh medium secondary sector.

Appendix 1: Engagement figures for Vale of Glamorgan schools in CSC’s literacy professional learning programmes for 2021-22.

Programme Name	Number of practitioners engaged
The Writing Revolution open cohort	6
The Writing Revolution Pupil Development Grant cohort	8
The Importance of Oracy for wellbeing and learning**	4
Teaching writing explicitly	4
Words Matter**	3
Primary Literacy Leaders	7
Heads of English	7
Languages, Literacy and Communication Area of Learning and Experience Network	39
Reading Reconsidered open cohorts	11
Reading Reconsidered PDG cohort	2

** please note that these figures are for September 2021 onwards only. Due to migrating to a new website previous practitioner data is not available

Appendix 2: Explanations of externally developed professional learning

Reading Reconsidered

Developed by Doug Lemov and the Teach Like a Champion team, this is a synchronous professional learning programme designed to support all teachers improve the explicit instruction of reading.

The intensive 7 session training programme will comprise of a series of 2.5-3 hour instructional sessions to develop rigour, insight and precision in reading.

The programme will take practitioners through evidence informed actionable strategies to develop pedagogy and practice for reading. These will cover:

1. The demands and challenges of reading
2. The importance of reading aloud for fluency and expression
2. How to develop accountable independent reading
4. Using knowledge building and embedding non-fiction to support comprehension
5. The importance of teaching implicit and explicit vocabulary
6. Using text dependent questioning to improve close Reading
7. Writing for Reading
8. Text Complexity and curriculum planning

Whilst it can be used as an individual approach it is designed as a 'train the trainer' model- meaning that schools who have attended should be looking to disseminate the training after the course.

The Writing Revolution

This programme introduces practitioners to the Hochman Method, an explicit set of sequenced strategies for teaching writing that can be integrated into any phase or domain. This is a synchronous professional learning programme delivered by The Writing Revolution team.

The intensive 7 session training programme will comprise of a series of 1.5-2 hour instructional sessions. Over the course of the programme practitioners will explore strategies to:

- Improve the structure, coherence, and clarity of students' writing, beginning at the sentence-level.
- Improve sentence level construction, moving on to outlines, paragraphs, and compositions.

- Improve the teaching of notetaking, summarisation, and revision.

Whilst it can be used as an individual approach it is designed as a 'train the trainer' model- meaning that schools who have attended should be looking to disseminate the training after the course.

Comparative Judgement

Comparative judgement is a process where judges compare two responses and decide which is better. Following repeated comparisons, the resulting data is statistically modelled, and responses placed on a scale of relative quality.

During the academic year 2019-20 CSC funded 39 schools to participate in a comparative judgement pilot. The schools were largely representative of the region as a whole with 13 secondary schools and 26 primary schools. Schools received funding to cover the costs of the registration and to participate in regional network meetings to discuss and help shape regional strategy.

In 2021-22 CSC has funded over 120 schools to participate in the national comparative judgement project, meaning that for the first time ever schools have access to reliable standardised writing ages for all pupils entered.

Voice 21

Voice 21 is a national charity that exists to enable teachers and schools to provide a high-quality oracy education so that all young people can find their voice for success in school and life.

In becoming a Voice 21 Oracy School schools are making a commitment: to transform oracy teaching and learning enabling all students to access and benefit from a high-quality oracy education

There are three progressive stages of membership, each typically lasting for a year and containing a carefully constructed blend of professional development and bespoke support.

Through courses, oracy consultancy and online learning, schools will work with V21 oracy teaching and learning experts to identify and address specific needs and ambitions for oracy, both in classrooms and across the school.

Numbers – quantities and proportions

nearly all =	with very few exceptions
most =	90% or more
many =	70% or more
a majority =	over 60%
half =	50%
around half =	close to 50%
a minority =	below 40%
few =	below 20%
very few =	less than 10%