Agenda Item No: 5

Meeting of:	**Start Well Scrutiny Committee**
Date of Meeting:	**Thursday, 19 November 2026**
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Start Well Scrutiny Committee
Urgent Decision Procedure Used (If yes, why)	
Item Type	Part I
Report Title:	School Improvement 2025-26
Portfolio Holder:	Cabinet Member for Education, Arts and the Welsh Language
Strategic Leadership Team:	Director of Learning and Skills
Lead Officer:	Carys Pritchard, Lead Officer for School Improvement

1.0 What is this report about?

1.1 Appendix A contains a report providing an overview of school improvement activity across the Vale of Glamorgan during the 2025-26 academic year, the first full year following the transfer of school improvement functions from Central South Consortium (CSC) to the Local Authority (LA).

1.2 The report summarises the support and challenge provided to schools, professional learning and partnership activity, progress in school improvement priorities, collaboration between schools, and Estyn inspection outcomes.

1.3 The report also identifies key strengths, areas for further development and priorities for 2026-27.

2.0 What are the Recommendations?

	Recommendations – What and How?	Reason for Recommendation – Why?
2.1	That Members consider the findings contained within the School Improvement Annual Report 2025-26.	To enable Members to review the impact of school improvement activity during the first full academic year following the transfer of school improvement functions to the LA.
2.2	That Scrutiny Committee endorses the progress made in supporting schools through school improvement, professional	To provide assurance regarding the effectiveness of school improvement arrangements and the support provided to schools.

	Recommendations – What and How?	Reason for Recommendation – Why?
	learning, collaboration and partnership working during 2025-26.	
2.3	That Members endorse the priorities for school improvement activity during 2026-27.	To support ongoing monitoring of school improvement activity and future strategic planning.

3.0 What is the background to this report?

3.1 Between September 2012 and August 2025, school improvement services for the Vale of Glamorgan were delivered through the regional consortium, Central South Consortium (CSC). Following the Welsh Government Middle Tier Review, responsibility for statutory school improvement functions transferred from the consortium to LAs. As a result, the School Improvement Team transferred to the Vale of Glamorgan Council in September 2025.

3.2 This report covers the first full academic year of locally delivered school improvement arrangements. It provides an overview of the support and challenge provided to schools, professional learning and partnership activity, school collaboration, and Estyn inspection outcomes during the 2025-26 academic year. It also highlights areas of strength, identifies areas for further development and sets out priorities for 2026-27.

4.0 What issues are there to be considered?

4.1 Members are asked to consider the effectiveness of school improvement arrangements during 2025-26, including the support and challenge provided to schools, professional learning and partnership activity, the development of the School Improvement Partnership Programme, and Estyn inspection outcomes.

4.2 The report also highlights areas requiring continued focus, including support for schools subject to enhanced monitoring or Estyn statutory follow-up, strengthening school to school collaboration, and evaluating the impact of the revised LA school improvement model.

5.0 How has evidence been used to inform the report, including the views of others?

5.1 Evidence used to inform this report includes:

- professional dialogue with school leaders, governors and school improvement officers
- findings from joint monitoring activities with school leaders
- scrutiny of school development plans
- professional learning participation and engagement data
- Estyn inspection outcomes
- information and intelligence provided by regional and national partners
- feedback from Collaboration Partnership Board meetings

6.0 What are the next steps if the recommendations are approved?

6.1 The findings of the report will inform school improvement activity during 2026-27, including the targeting of support and challenge, professional learning programmes, collaboration activity and support for schools requiring enhanced monitoring or Estyn follow-up.

6.2 Progress against the identified priorities for 2026-27 will continue to be monitored through regular school improvement activity and reported to Scrutiny Committee through future performance and school improvement reports.

7.0 How does this report support Vale 2030 and Reshaping?

7.1 The report supports the delivery of Vale 2030 by promoting high-quality education, improving outcomes for learners and reducing inequalities.

7.2 It also reflects the Council's commitment to reshaping services through strengthened partnership working, integrated support for schools and the implementation of locally delivered school improvement arrangements following the transfer of functions from CSC to the LA.

8.0 How does this demonstrate the Five Ways of Working?

8.1 The report focuses on sustainable school improvement through professional learning and school collaboration. Activities such as the School Improvement Partnership Programme and support for schools, including those in Estyn follow-up categories, are intended to build capacity and improve outcomes for current and future learners.

8.2 Support and challenge activities, enhanced monitoring arrangements, professional dialogue and the use of first-hand evidence help identify issues at an early stage and target support before concerns escalate. The report also highlights work to improve outcomes for disadvantaged learners.

8.3 School improvement activity is aligned with local and national priorities, including teaching and learning, literacy, attendance, equity and Welsh language development. The report demonstrates how school improvement activity contributes to wider educational and community wellbeing objectives.

8.4 The report evidences extensive collaboration between schools, governing bodies, CSC, Dysgu, the National Centre for Learning Welsh and other partners. The development of the School Improvement Partnership Programme further promotes school to school collaboration and shared learning.

8.5 The report has been informed by ongoing engagement with school leaders, governors, School Improvement Officers, LA services and regional and national partners. Schools have also played a key role in shaping collaborative arrangements and identifying improvement priorities through self-evaluation and development planning processes.

Resources

9.0 Finance

9.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with the recommendations contained within this report. School improvement functions transferred to the LA in September 2025, and activities described within the report have been delivered through existing staffing structures, commissioned services and approved budgets.

10.0 Workforce

10.1 There are no direct workforce implications associated with the recommendations contained within this report.

10.2 The report outlines how existing School Improvement Team capacity, together with partnership working with regional and national organisations, has supported workforce development across schools during 2025-26.

11:0 Legal and Equalities

11.1 The LA has statutory duties in relation to school improvement under the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013.

11.2 The report does not identify any direct adverse equality impacts arising from the recommendations. School improvement activity outlined within the report supports the Council's commitment to promoting equality of opportunity and reducing educational disadvantage. The report also highlights examples of effective practice recognised by Estyn in relation to inclusion and anti-racism.

12.0 Key Contacts

12.1 **Who are the primary officers to contact with any comments and/or queries on the report?**

Lead Officer: Carys Pritchard Lead Officer for School Improvement cpritchard@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk	Democratic Services Officer: Gareth Davies Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer gjdavies@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

Appendix

Appendix A – School Improvement Report 2025-26

Background Documents

Appendix A

School Improvement

Annual Report

2025-26

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1.0 PURPOSE

This report provides an overview of the impact of school improvement activity during 2025-26 following the transfer of school improvement functions to the local authority (LA) in September 2025. It outlines key outcomes, identifies areas of strength and challenge, and identifies next steps for 2026-27.

2.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report outlines the impact of school improvement activity during 2025-26, the first full academic year following the transfer of school improvement functions from the regional consortium to the LA. During this period, the School Improvement Team has maintained continuity of support whilst establishing new arrangements that strengthen collaboration with LA services, schools and regional partners.

Key areas of impact include:

- All schools received support and challenge through a named School Improvement Officer (SIO), with a focus on self-evaluation, improvement planning, leadership development and the effective use of Pupil Development Grant (PDG) funding.
- Increased joint working with Inclusion, Additional Learning Needs (ALN), Finance and Human Resources (HR) services has strengthened the coherence of support provided to schools.
- Schools identified 173 improvement priorities, with the majority focused on teaching and learning. Priorities demonstrate strong alignment with LA and national expectations, particularly in relation to reading, attendance, inclusion, equity and leadership development.
- Seven schools received enhanced monitoring during the year. Purposeful support and challenge contributed to two schools being removed from enhanced monitoring during summer 2026.
- Professional learning and support continued to be delivered through collaboration with regional and national partners.
- The implementation of the School Improvement Partnership Programme has been introduced in the Vale of Glamorgan. A Collaboration Partnership Board has been established to provide strategic oversight of collaboration, with a specific focus on reading. Early evidence indicates increased activity and engagement, although further work is required to embed sustainable school-to-school improvement and develop collaborative practices.
- Estyn outcomes were positive overall. Thirteen schools received a core inspection, with twelve schools (92%) requiring no follow-up activity. Estyn also

recognised effective practice across schools, with eleven inspection reports containing at least one spotlight feature.
- One school in an Estyn statutory follow up category, Fairfield Primary, was removed from the category of significant improvement following a successful monitoring visit.

Areas for further development include the need to:

- Strengthen school to school collaboration and shared accountability for learner outcomes.
- Embed and evaluate the revised School Improvement service model.
- Continue to provide targeted support for schools requiring enhanced monitoring or in an Estyn statutory follow-up category.
- Evaluate and extend the Welsh language workforce development pilot.
- Use intelligence from inspections, monitoring activity and school priorities to target support and professional learning more effectively, as well as to share effective practice.

3.0 BACKGROUND

- Between September 2012 and August 2025, Central South Consortium (CSC) delivered school improvement services on behalf of the five LAs of Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf and the Vale of Glamorgan. This included support for statutory school improvement functions and a regional professional learning offer.
- Following the Welsh Government Middle Tier Review, responsibility for school improvement transferred from the consortium to LAs. As a result, the School Improvement Team transferred to the Vale of Glamorgan in September 2025.
- CSC continues to provide a streamlined regional professional learning and support service commissioned by the five LA.
- Schools also access national support through organisations such as Dysgu and the National Centre for Learning Welsh. The LA works closely with these partners to ensure professional learning meets local priorities and school needs.

4.0 SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT: SUPPORT AND CHALLENGE

4.1 Role of School Improvement Officer (SIO)

- The School Improvement Team comprises four SIOs, equivalent to three full-time posts, together with a full-time Lead Officer for School Improvement.

- Following the transfer of school improvement responsibilities in September 2025, all SIOs now work exclusively with Vale of Glamorgan schools.
- Each school is allocated a named SIO who provides support and challenge through professional dialogue, first-hand evidence gathering, self-evaluation activities and, where needed, the brokerage of bespoke support. This ensures that schools receive timely, evidence-based advice and professional learning and support aligned to their identified improvement priorities.
- SIOs have supported the Headteacher Professional Development Review process for all headteachers, providing support, challenge and guidance to strengthen accountability and leadership development.
- Professional learning for governors has further strengthened governance and leadership of schools. Between September 2025 and July 2026, the team delivered 14 training sessions covering governor induction, school performance data, headteacher professional development reviews and preparing for inspection. A total of 212 governors attended these sessions. Evaluation feedback was highly positive, with nearly all respondents reporting that the training met its intended aims and objectives, that the content was useful, and that the quality of delivery was good or very good.
- During the 2025-26 academic year, SIOs contributed to the successful recruitment of four headteachers and nine deputy headteachers, supporting leadership stability and succession planning across the sector.
- All schools were also supported to strengthen the planning, monitoring and evaluation of PDG expenditure. This has increased the focus on the impact of the grant on outcomes and wellbeing for disadvantaged learners. Schools are increasingly using PDG funding strategically to address barriers to learning, strengthen wellbeing and inclusion, improve teaching, and raise outcomes. However, challenges remain in improving the attainment and attendance of learner eligible for free school meals.
- The transfer of the School Improvement Team to the Vale of Glamorgan has begun to strengthen collaborative work. An increasing number of joint visits have been undertaken with colleagues from Inclusion and Additional Learning Needs services, helping to provide a more coherent and coordinated approach to supporting schools. More recently, SIOs have worked alongside Finance and Human Resources officers to support school leaders with budget recovery plans and workforce planning. Through this work, SIOs provide constructive support and challenge, professional advice and an external perspective on key strategic decisions, including staffing structures and resource deployment.

Strengthening School Improvement Through Effective Partnership Working

Context: Following the transfer of school improvement services to the Vale of Glamorgan in September 2025, the SIO role was reshaped to provide more flexible, responsive support tailored to the needs of individual schools and clusters.

What did we do?

SIOs have:

- worked with schools and clusters to identify improvement priorities and develop a flexible package of support aligned to need
- maintained close partnership working with CSC to secure timely specialist support for schools requiring additional intervention
- developed links between school improvement and other LA services such as inclusion and finance
- brokered cluster wide support where common priorities existed, enabling schools to work collectively on areas such as reading, coaching and curriculum development
- supported schools to take greater ownership of improvement by facilitating professional dialogue, challenge and collaboration rather than directing activity
- shared effective practice across schools, phases and clusters, helping leaders learn from successful approaches beyond their own settings

What difference did it make?

- Stronger links between school improvement, inclusion, finance and other LA services enabled earlier identification of emerging issues and more coordinated support.
- Schools benefited from a more coherent improvement offer that combined LA and CSC expertise.
- Relationships between schools and SIOs developed into a more genuine improvement partnerships, characterised by shared responsibility and professional trust.
- SIO support became increasingly differentiated, allowing greater focus on schools and leaders requiring additional challenge, coaching or intervention.

Supporting School Improvement

Context: Joint lesson observations involving the headteacher, deputy headteacher and SIO identified inconsistencies in foundation learning provision, particularly in the

quality of learning environments, classroom organisation, and the level of challenge and support provided for learners.

What did we do?

SIO:

- undertook regular learning walks with school leaders to validate self-evaluation findings and identify priorities for improvement
- provided targeted feedback to the foundation learning lead on classroom organisation, learning environments, expectations, and levels of challenge and support
- brokered professional learning opportunities and secured targeted support from CSC to strengthen leadership and provision
- facilitated a visit to another school to observe effective foundation learning practice

What difference did it make?

- Staff engagement in professional learning is beginning to strengthen consistency in foundation learning practice across the school.
- Foundation learning environments have become more purposeful, engaging and effective.
- Expectations for teaching, learning and provision are clearer and more consistent across Nursery and Reception.
- Monitoring evidence shows improvements in teaching, provision and learning environments across most foundation learning classes.
- Leaders are better placed to sustain improvement through clearer expectations, more effective monitoring and strengthened professional dialogue.

4.2 School Priorities

- During 2025-26, SIOs worked closely with school leaders to identify a clear set of improvement priorities. These were informed by robust self-evaluation and aligned to each school's context, capacity and improvement needs.
- Schools were supported to bring these priorities together within a single strategic School Development Plan (SDP), maintaining a clear focus on the areas most likely to improve provision and outcomes for learners.
- Across the LA, schools identified 173 improvement priorities, with the majority focused on teaching and learning (117). Additional priorities related to leadership and improvement (38) and wellbeing, care, support and guidance (35).

- The most common priorities focused on improving the quality and consistency of teaching, strengthening reading, writing and numeracy, developing Curriculum for Wales, increasing learner independence, and improving assessment and feedback. Attendance, inclusion, wellbeing, additional learning needs and anti-racism also featured strongly, reflecting local and national priorities.
- Leadership priorities focused on strengthening self-evaluation and improvement planning, developing leadership capacity, improving accountability and enhancing governance arrangements.
- Overall, school priorities demonstrate strong alignment with LA priorities, particularly in relation to teaching and learning, reading, attendance, equity and inclusion, and sustainable leadership development.
- Through regular engagement visits, professional dialogue and review of first-hand evidence, SIOs supported schools to maintain focus on improvement priorities, evaluate impact, identify emerging challenges and adapt plans to sustain progress and improve outcomes for learners.

4.3 Enhanced Monitoring

- Enhanced monitoring is used to provide additional support where schools would benefit from a more focused approach to addressing areas for development, including leadership, teaching and learning, wellbeing, equity and inclusion.
- During 2025-26, seven schools were subject to enhanced monitoring. Schools received regular review meetings, typically held termly or half-termly, to evaluate progress against agreed improvement priorities. These meetings brought together headteachers, governing bodies and LA officers to provide robust support, challenge and accountability.
- Following each review, schools received a progress report evaluating the actions undertaken, the evidence of impact and the next steps required to accelerate improvement.
- Where appropriate, schools also received bespoke support from CSC. During 2025-26, this including support for curriculum development, teaching and learning, and Welsh language provision.
- Support was regularly reviewed and adapted in response to progress, with activities carefully coordinated to maximise impact and avoid duplication.
- As a result of improved performance and increased leadership capacity, two schools were removed from enhanced monitoring during the summer term 2026.

Supporting a school in enhanced monitoring

Context: At the end of the autumn term, joint lesson observations undertaken by the SIO and senior leaders identified inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning, alongside declining pupil attendance. Following discussions with school leaders, the school was moved from core to enhanced monitoring, with support focused on two key priorities: improving the quality and consistency of teaching and learning and raising attendance.

What did we do?

SIO:

- undertook joint monitoring and review activities with senior leaders, including learning walks and scrutiny of pupils' work
- worked collaboratively with the LA Inclusion Team and school leaders to review attendance arrangements and strengthen procedures relating to attendance expectations, holiday authorisation and the graduated response
- signposted staff to relevant professional learning opportunities and effective practice within local schools
- facilitated opportunities for leaders to observe effective teaching and learning practice in another school and consider how this could be adapted within their own context

What difference did it make?

- School leaders have established a more robust and systematic approach to monitoring teaching and learning, developing a secure understanding of strengths and areas for improvement at both whole-school and class level, enabling more targeted feedback and support for staff.
- Where inconsistencies have been identified, leaders have taken appropriate action to address variation in practice and strengthen accountability.
- Attendance is now a higher strategic priority within the school. Leaders systematically monitor attendance, including that of vulnerable groups, and have strengthened processes and procedures through clearly defined leadership responsibilities.
- Leaders continue to demonstrate a strong commitment to working with parents and carers, supporting constructive dialogue to improve attendance and address barriers to regular school attendance.

4.4 School Causing Concern

- During the 2025-26 academic year, one school in the Vale of Glamorgan was subject to an informal warning due to ongoing concerns regarding the quality of

teaching and learning. Following significant improvement and evidence of stronger teaching and learning across the school, it was agreed in March 2026 that sufficient progress had been made and the informal warning rescinded.

5.0 SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT: PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND SUPPORT

5.1 Professional learning and bespoke support

- The School Improvement Team works in partnership with regional and national organisations to ensure schools have access to high-quality professional learning and bespoke support aligned to local, regional and national priorities.
- Through collaboration with CSC, Dysgu and the National Centre for Learning Welsh, schools are supported to address their improvement priorities, strengthen leadership capacity and improve outcomes for learners.

5.2 Central South Consortium

- CSC continues to provide a regional professional learning offer following the Middle Tier Review of education in Wales. The programme supports schools across a range of areas including teaching and learning, curriculum development, cross-curricular skills, leadership, Welsh language development, newly qualified teacher induction and professional learning for support staff.
- Professional learning is closely aligned to SDP priorities, Estyn recommendations and national reform agendas, and is delivered through a combination of face-to-face and online learning, professional networks and bespoke support. Schools and clusters are also able to access targeted support where additional expertise is required.
- Professional learning engagement with CSC has been strong across the Vale of Glamorgan. Between September 2025 and March 2026, nearly all schools participated in professional learning activities with CSC. All sectors are represented, demonstrating broad engagement with professional learning opportunities across primary, secondary, all-age and special schools.
- Between September 2025 and March 2026, 24 Vale of Glamorgan schools benefited from bespoke support programmes focused on curriculum development, teaching and learning, skills and leadership. Targeted support was provided to the three schools in Estyn statutory follow up to support delivery of their Post-Inspection Action Plans and secure improvement against identified priorities.
- The School Improvement Team plays a key role in identifying professional learning needs, brokering appropriate support, and evaluating impact. This has helped to ensure that professional learning remains focused on school

improvement priorities and learner outcomes. SIOs have also ensured regular communication with colleagues in CSC to ensure clarity regarding professional learning needs and the progress being made by schools.

- During its first full academic year within the Vale of Glamorgan, the School Improvement Team has maintained continuity of support for schools while establishing new arrangements that strengthen collaboration across LA services and with regional and national partners.

School Improvement: Partnership working with CSC

Context: The school was subject to enhanced monitoring and following an Estyn inspection, was placed in a statutory follow-up category of significant improvement.

What did we do?

- The SIO worked with school leaders and the CSC to develop and monitor the Post-Inspection Action Plan.
- Targeted curriculum, teaching and professional learning support was brokered in response to Estyn recommendations.
- Progress was monitored through learning walks, learner voice activities and half-termly progress meetings involving school leaders and LA officers.
- Regular communication and joint planning and monitoring involving school leaders, SIO and CSC officers ensured support remained aligned to the school's priorities and emerging needs.

What difference did it make?

- The school benefited from a coordinated programme of support delivered through effective partnership working between LA and CSC.
- Leaders strengthened their monitoring and evaluation practices and increased confidence in leading improvement.
- Improvements were evident in curriculum design, teaching and learning and Welsh oracy.
- Following a monitoring visit, Estyn judged the school to have made sufficient progress to be removed from the list of schools requiring significant improvement.

5.3 Dysgu

- Dysgu is Welsh Government's national education professional learning and leadership organisation. It was established in September 2025 to strengthen the strategic coherence, quality and impact of professional learning across the

education system in Wales, particularly in response to the findings of the Middle Tier Review of education in Wales.

- During 2025-26:
  - 29 practitioners secured places on Middle Leadership Programme commencing in autumn 2026
  - 18 practitioners secured places on the Senior Leadership Programme commencing in autumn 2026
  - five senior leaders secured places on the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) programme commencing in autumn 2026
  - three leaders successfully achieved the NPQH qualification
- These programmes will help to strengthen leadership capacity and succession planning across the authority, ensuring current and future leaders are well placed to lead improvement effectively.

5.4 National Centre for Learning Welsh

- Since April 2025, the Vale of Glamorgan has worked in partnership with the Education Workforce Tutor Provision at the National Centre for Learning Welsh, Cardiff University, to strengthen Welsh language skills of staff.
- A targeted whole-school approach to professional learning was piloted during 2025-26, moving away from the traditional model of supporting individual staff members through standalone courses.
- The pilot involved five English-medium primary schools in the Penarth cluster: Cogan Primary School, Evenlode Primary School, St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Sully Primary School and Victoria Primary School.
- Since September 2025, schools have worked with an Education Workforce Tutor to identify individual needs and implement tailored professional learning programmes that support Welsh language development across all staff groups.
- Through the programme, 72 teaching assistants completed the Cymraeg Bob Dydd support staff programme, two headteachers participated in Cymraeg Bob Dydd for leaders, ten teachers undertook the Cwrs Byr Dwys intensive language course, and six staff attended Welsh Language Leader development days.
- This coordinated approach has increased staff engagement with Welsh language learning and strengthened whole school ownership of Welsh language development.
- The next phase will focus on evaluating the impact of the pilot, including staff engagement, progress in Welsh language skills and the effectiveness of the whole-school model. The findings will inform future workforce development planning, helping to refine the approach, target support effectively and establish a framework for wider implementation.

- Subject to evaluation outcomes, the LA will work with the Education Workforce Tutor Provision to extend the model to a further cluster of schools across the Vale of Glamorgan.

6.0 SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME: COLLABORATION

- Collaboration is a key principle underpinning national expectations for school improvement and is central to the School Improvement Partnership Programme (SIPP).
- During spring and summer term 2025, the LA worked in closely with a representative group of headteachers to design the Vale of Glamorgan's approach to SIPP. Through regular engagement, feedback and consultation, this group played a significant role in shaping the programme.
- In October 2025, the Vale of Glamorgan formally launched the School Improvement Partnership Programme with all headteachers across the LA.
- The programme reflects national expectations that identify both vertical and horizontal collaboration as key drivers of school improvement, supporting schools to learn from one another, share effective practice and strengthen collective responsibility for improving outcomes for all learners.
- Vertical collaboration brings together primary schools and their partner secondary school within each cluster to support learner progression across the 3 to 16 continuum.
- Horizontal collaboration is being developed through networks of schools within the same phase, enabling schools to share expertise, effective practice and improvement strategies.
- Initially vertical collaboration focused on reading and horizontal collaboration on teaching and learning. From the spring term onwards, the programme sharpened its focus on improving reading outcomes, with particular attention to the reading performance of eFSM learners.
- To support this work, a Collaboration Partnership Board was established during the autumn term 2025. The Board includes representatives from all clusters, LA services including the school improvement team and the CSC.
- The Board provides strategic oversight of reading improvement, monitor progress against agreed priorities, coordinates support and professional learning, facilitates the sharing of effective practice and evaluates emerging impact.
- During 2025-26, the Collaboration Partnership Board met on a termly basis. While still at an early stage of development, the Board has secured representation from all clusters.
- Collaboration has ensured that there is a consistent focus on reading across the authority. Engagement between primary and secondary schools is beginning to

increase, supporting the sharing of effective practice, greater alignment of approaches and the sharing of cluster level data is beginning to develop.

- Further work is needed to ensure that collaborative activity translates into meaningful school to school improvement, characterised by schools learning from one another, leaders providing both support and professional challenge to their peers, joint self-evaluation and a shared accountability for the progress of all learners across a cluster.

7.0 ESTYN OUTCOMES

7.1 Inspection Outcomes

- During the 2025-26:
  - 13 schools received a core Estyn inspection.
  - 12 schools (92%) were judged not to require any follow-up activity.
  - one school, Llantwit Major High School, was placed in the statutory follow-up category of Special Measures.
  - six schools received an interim visit from Estyn that focused on progress against previous inspection recommendations or identified school improvement priorities.
- Please see Appendix A for further information about core inspections undertaken during the 2025-26 academic year, and Appendix B for information about interim visits.

7.2 Identification of Effective Practice

- Estyn continues to identify and celebrate effective and innovative practice through its 'spotlight on…' features within inspection reports.
- During 2025-26:
  - 11 of the 13 inspection reports included at least one spotlight.
  - six schools received two spotlight features.
  - Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Morgannwg was invited by Estyn to produce two case studies, recognising the quality of its practice in developing pupils' Welsh language skills and using enquiry-based professional learning to improve teaching and learning.
- The range of spotlight features highlighted strengths in curriculum design, literacy development, inclusion, anti-racism, wellbeing, engagement with parents /carers, learner independence and professional learning. This demonstrates the breadth of effective practice across Vale of Glamorgan schools and provides valuable opportunities for schools to learn from one another.

- Please see Appendix C for further information about the spotlights identified in Estyn inspection reports during 2025-26.

7.3 Schools in Estyn Follow-up Categories

- During 2025-26 academic year, four schools were in Estyn statutory follow-up category.
- The LA continues to provide robust support, challenge and monitoring to these schools, with half-term meetings held to monitor progress.
- The Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee receives termly updates on the progress of schools in follow-up categories.
- The Chair of Scrutiny, the Cabinet Member for Education, Arts and the Welsh Language and the Leader of the Council are invited to attend the half-termly multi-agency meetings for secondary schools in special measures.
- **Pencoedtre High School** has continued to make progress in strengthening leadership and accountability arrangements. A restructured senior leadership team has increased leadership capacity and improved the school's ability to drive improvement. Revised self-evaluation and improvement planning processes are helping leaders to identify areas for development more accurately and evaluate the impact of actions more effectively. Early improvements are evident in literacy and numeracy provision, although further work is required to strengthen middle leadership and ensure greater consistency in the quality of teaching and skills development across the curriculum. Overall, attendance has improved from a low starting point, although further work is required to reduce persistent absence and improve attendance among eFSM learners. ALN processes are now more systematic, with robust arrangements in place for the development and review of IDPs. Regular communication between the ALNCo and key staff is helping to embed ALN considerations more effectively within whole-school systems and practice.
- **Llantwit Major High School** entered Special Measures following its inspection in February 2026. Its Post-Inspection Action Plan was approved by Estyn in July 2026. A comprehensive programme of support involving the LA, CSC and school-to-school partnerships is now in place.
- **St Richard Gwyn Catholic High School** continues to implement its Post-Inspection Action Plan, which was approved by Estyn in November 2025. New self-evaluation arrangements and targeted support from CSC and external providers are helping leaders strengthen teaching, learning and skills development.
- **Fairfield Primary School** has continued to receive targeted support following the approval of its Post-Inspection Action Plan in July 2025. Interim leadership arrangements have provided stability during the current academic year. Support

is focused on curriculum development, teaching and learning, mathematics, numeracy and Welsh language provision. In July 2026, Estyn undertook a monitoring visit to Fairfield Primary. Estyn judged the school to have made sufficient progress in relation to their recommendations. As a result, His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales has removed Fairfield Primary from the list of schools requiring significant improvement.

8.0 NEXT STEPS

The first year of LA led school improvement arrangements has provided stability following the transfer of functions from CSC as well as beginning to develop a stronger integration with wider LA services. The next phase will focus on strengthening collaboration between schools, targeting support with increasing precision and evaluating the effectiveness of the new school improvement arrangements to secure continued improvement for all learners.

To build on the progress made during 2025-26 and address the areas identified for further development, the following priorities will form the focus of school improvement activity during 2026-27:

- Embed the revised School Improvement model, using feedback from LA officers, SIOs, schools to inform further refinement.
- Continue robust support, challenge and monitoring for schools in statutory Estyn follow-up categories and those requiring enhanced monitoring, ensuring timely intervention where concerns emerge.
- Work alongside school leaders to strengthen the use of self-evaluation, first-hand evidence and performance information to identify priorities and target support more effectively.
- Support schools to strengthen evaluation of PDG expenditure and use evidence more effectively to target interventions that improve attendance, engagement and outcomes for eFSM learners.
- Evaluate, with the support of the Collaboration Partnership Board, the impact of collaboration work and develop the next phase of collaborative activity to strengthen school to school improvement.
- Evaluate the Welsh language workforce development pilot and, subject to outcomes, implement the next phase with an additional cluster of schools.
- Further strengthen leadership development and succession planning through engagement with regional and national leadership development opportunities and school to school support.

- Use analysis of Estyn inspections, SDP priorities and monitoring activity to inform professional learning, support programmes and strategic planning, and to share effective practice.
- Expand integrated working across LA services, including Inclusion, ALN, Finance and Human Resources, to provide more coherent support for schools.

APPENDIX A: LIST OF SCHOOLS IN RECEIPT OF A CORE INSPECTION DURING 2025-26 AND OUTCOME

School	Date Inspected	Outcome	Link to report
Gladstone Primary	September 2025	Not In Follow-up	Read report here
Colcot Primary	October 2025	Not In Follow-up	Read report here
Ysgol Sant Baruc	October 2025	Not In Follow-up	Read report here
Cowbridge School	January 2026	Not In Follow-up	Read report here
St Nicholas Church in Wales Primary	February 2026	Not In Follow-up	Read report here
Llantwit Major High	February 2026	Special Measures	Read report here
All Saints Church in Wales Primary	March 2026	Not In Follow-up	Read report here
Cadoxton Primary	March 2026	Not In Follow-up	Read report here
Llansannor and Llanharry Church in Wales Primary School	March 2026	Not In Follow-up	Read report here
Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Morgannwg	April 2026	Not In Follow-up	Read report here
Barry Island Primary	May 2026	Not In Follow-up	Read report here
High Street Primary	May 2026	Not In Follow-up	Read report here
Cogan Primary	May 2026	Not In Follow-up	Read report here

APPENDIX B: LIST OF SCHOOLS IN RECEIPT OF AN INTERIM VISIT DURING 2025-26

School	Date	Copy of letter
St Helen's Catholic Primary		Interim letter
Ysgol Iolo Morganwg		Interim letter
Dinas Powys Primary		Interim letter
Romilly Primary		Interim letter
St Brides Church in Wales Primary		Interim letter
Victoria Primary		Interim letter

APPENDIX C: NUMBER AND FOCUS ON INTERESTING OR INNOVATIVE CASE STUDIES IDENTIFIED DURING 2025-26

School	Spotlight identified
Gladstone Primary	• Providing a highly effective enabling environment for younger pupils • Effective partnership working to support pupils and their families
Colcot Primary	• Partnership Working and Supporting the Needs of Families
Ysgol Sant Baruc	• Using a staff charter to facilitate the performance evaluation procedure
Cowbridge School	• Developing pupils' reading skills • A collaborative culture of professional learning
St Nicholas Church in Wales Primary	• Effective curriculum development • Promoting an anti-racist culture
Cadoxton Primary	• An authentic curriculum that raises standards • Breaking down barriers to learning, supporting pupil engagement and regular attendance
Llansannor and LLanharry Church in Wales Primary	• An effective curriculum • Developing independent learners
Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Morgannwg	• Anti-racism strategy to develop curricular provision Case Studies • how the school supports and enriches pupils' Welsh language skills

	• how it uses enquiry projects within its professional learning programme to improve teaching and learning
Barry Island Primary	• Developing a collaborative culture of reflection and improvement • Building critical thinkers and responsible digital citizens
High Street Primary	• Empowering pupils through exceptional well-being support
Cogan Primary	• Inspiring inclusion everyday