

**Central South Consortium Contribution to Raising Standards in Bridgend Schools**

*Discussion Paper for Bridgend Scrutiny*

*January 2017*

**Background**

1. Since 2012, Central South Consortium has delivered aspects of school improvement services on behalf of the five authorities: Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf and the Vale of Glamorgan. This covers 400 schools, 30% of Wales' children. It is a growing region with rapidly changing demographic encompassing increasingly diverse communities across the economic sub region. It remains the region with the highest number of children living in poverty – just over 1 in 4 children claim free school meals in 2016.
2. The service delivers challenge and support on behalf of the five local authorities, governed through a Joint Committee of Cabinet Members from each authority. The Joint Committee meets four times a year and formally approves the annual business plan and budget for the service, holding the service to account in terms of performance and budgetary control.
3. Scrutiny Committees in each of the five authorities invite the Lead Officer for the authority to report on the performance of the schools in their authority and the contribution of the consortium at any stage during the year. An annual report from the consortium relating to progress in the previous academic year and priorities for the year ahead is also provided.

**Central South Consortium Business Plan for the Financial Year 2016/17**

4. The consortium business plan for 2016/17 can be found here [www.cscjes.org.uk/About-Us](http://www.cscjes.org.uk/About-Us) . It has three priorities:
  - Raising standards particularly in literacy/Welsh/English, numeracy/mathematics and improving the outcomes of the vulnerable learners fastest;
  - Improving the capacity of the system to be self improving, particularly improving leadership and governance, teaching and learning and effective challenge and support;
  - Develop the consortium to as a high performing organisation focusing on performance management, governance and effective use of resources.
5. The business plan includes stretching and ambitious targets based on those set in each local authority whilst also reflecting school target setting. Each local authority has agreed a local authority annex, which indicates local authority specific targets, reflecting those set in the post inspection action plan or corporate education plan.
6. The business plan sets out how we aim to deliver these priorities through effective school self-evaluation and improvement planning, underpinned by building capacity in schools to support other schools through the development of the 'Central South Wales Challenge'. This is led by schools and has involved the continued development of evidence based strategies (school improvement groups (SIGs), pathfinder pairings, school improvement hubs

and peer enquiry models in which schools can be resourced to work together to share practice across the region. Further information about these programmes can be seen here <http://www.cscjes.org.uk/Central-South-Wales-Challenge/What-is-the-Strategy>

7. The consortium's self evaluation process reviews regularly the impact of challenge and support and provides an update report to the Advisory Board and Joint Committee. Part of the Central South Consortium's self-evaluation is drawn from a specific evaluation programme commissioned from Cardiff University focused on the Central South Wales Challenge programme to evidence impact over time on capacity in the system beyond the immediate school performance information.

### **Performance across the Central South region in 2016**

8. Since 2012 standards have improved rapidly, compared to the national average, across the region at every key stage. In 2016 the region continued to show strong improvement and was above the national average at every key stage for the first time and remained above it for the second year in key stages 1, 2 and 4. Standards for the most vulnerable children continued to rise fastest in the region, compared to Wales at all key stages, and in particular children living in poverty perform better in the Central South region than across the rest of Wales at key stage four.
9. In 2015/16 the proportion of schools in inspection categories (SI and SM) is lower than the national proportion in 2015/16 (5.5% regionally compared to 6.0% nationally). This proportion is lower than the cumulative proportion seen since 2010 regionally and nationally (7.6% for both). However, based on 2015/16 inspections, more secondary schools went into a category or follow up compared to the national position whilst primary schools' inspection profile is significantly better than the national picture.
10. Categorisation outcomes for the 2016/17 academic year demonstrate that schools in need of the more intense levels of support have reduced in each authority across the region, although less so at secondary level. Categorisation headlines for the region will be presented to the Scrutiny Committee following the national publication on the 31<sup>st</sup> January.
11. During the 2015/16 year three local authorities in the region were removed from an Estyn follow up category; Special Measures (Merthyr Tydfil), Significant Improvement (Cardiff) and the Vale of Glamorgan was removed from Estyn monitoring. All three inspection reports cited the contribution of the consortium in working effectively with the local authority to improve outcomes for learners and contributed towards the progress made in the authorities' schools.
12. In March 2016, the consortium itself was inspected by Estyn. The inspection report recognised progress in establishing clear strategy, vision, delivery of consistent challenge and support and partnership working. It had three 'good' judgements for leadership, improving quality and strategic partnerships and two 'adequate judgements' relating to school improvement and use of resources. The four recommendations focus on:
  - reducing variation in standards at KS4
  - improving specificity of judgements of teaching and leadership by challenge advisers,
  - evaluating impact of support strategies and
  - evidencing value for money.

### **Consortium Self -evaluation and Business Planning 2017/18**

13. The Consortium business planning process for 2017/18 is well underway and will be brought to the Joint Committee in March 2017.
14. The 2017/18 business plan will be developed in the context of a number of specific strategic challenges as well as areas where self-evaluation indicates area for improvement. Strategic challenges for the Consortium include the need to work with others across Wales and with Welsh government to support the implementation of the new curriculum, 'Successful Futures'. A number of schools are working as 'pioneers' developing elements of the curriculum or teaching and learning models, but there remains at present some need for further clarity about how implementation of curriculum reform for all schools will work. In addition, there remain significant challenges about workforce reform, including to meet aspirations for spoken Welsh and digital skills as well as new proposals for reform of initial teacher training. A further question concerns the emerging proposals for local government reform due in the spring of 2017, which emphasises a need for services to be delivered collaboratively across authorities and regions.
15. The self-evaluation report is updated regularly and identifies a number of areas for improvement for the region as a whole. These include:
  - Despite a narrowing of the gap, gaps for vulnerable learners, particularly e-FSM learners, are still too wide;
  - There is significant underachievement by boys in languages;
  - There remains wide variation in secondary outcomes with a small number of very vulnerable secondary schools making progress too slowly ;
  - More able learners' outcomes are improving but can do further particularly at Key Stage five (post 16);
  - Leadership capacity in the system and recruitment to core subject teaching posts remains a challenge;
  - Challenge advisers' reporting is improving but judgements regarding teaching and leadership need to be made more robustly;
  - There is evidence to link most school to school working to impact but more needs to be done to evidence sustainable impact through evaluation and deepen the impact of enquiry led practice at the classroom level;
  - There is more to do to build system leadership behaviours from many heads;
  - Implementation of performance management needs to be tighter for staff and there is more to do to embed a culture of self evaluation and business planning in order to evidence value for money;
  - There is further work to do with elected members and governors to raise awareness and improve coordinated scrutiny of the consortium.
16. The financial year 2017/18 business plan will set out how the organisation will, as far as possible, respond to strategic challenges and address areas for improvement along with the Estyn recommendations through a detailed resourced plan developed with input from schools, staff and Local Authorities.

17. In the financial year 2017/18, local authorities have reduced core funding to the consortium by 5% compared to that of the previous year. The business plan will include how the Education Improvement Grant (EIG) is to be allocated, which will aim to increase delegation rates (currently 92% of EIG is delegated to schools) further than in previous years and reduced further the top slice retained which is increasingly used to fund schools to provide support. In addition Welsh Government provides grant to the Consortium to deliver specific national priorities, normally through school led projects.
18. The final business plan for the financial year 17/18 will be presented to the Joint Committee for approval in March 2017. The plan will have five areas of focus:
  1. Improving outcomes for vulnerable learners through effective partnership work with inclusion services;
  2. Delivering curriculum reform through school to school working;
  3. Improving leadership, governance and workforce reform;
  4. Rapid and sustainable intervention;
  5. Delivering value for money.
19. Again, each Local Authority has participated in establishing the priorities and constructing the business plan. Local Authority Annexes will continue, budget permitting, where the business plan does not meet the specific requirements from the local authorities set out in their own corporate education plan.

### **Performance in Bridgend Schools**

Standards over a three-year period are continuing to improve in line with national rates of improvement. Bridgend is performing better than national averages in many indicators and better than similar local authorities, based on national ranking, in most indicators.

There was a dip in performance in the Foundation Phase, as measured by the Foundation Phase Outcome Indicator, in 2016, however, it was from a previous very high position and still leaves Bridgend slightly above the national average and in rank 12 position (rank 15 being the three year free school meal average for Bridgend).

There is a serious concern in key stage 2 where standards, based on the core subject indicator, did not rise in line with the national rate in 2016; performance being slightly below the national average for the last two years; and, in rank position 17 in 2016. Closer analysis reveals that this is mainly due to a decline in the performance of pupils eligible for free school meals. There is a three year downward trend in the performance of this group of learners at key stage two, whereas, at all other key stages there is a three year improving trend.

Performance in key stage 3 is good. A particular strength is performance at key stage 4 and Post 16. In 2016 Bridgend is above national averages and the benchmark of rank 15 in all key performance indicators. The key qualification of level 2 threshold including English/Welsh and mathematics has been above the national average for the last two years and in rank position 9 for the last two years. Schools in Bridgend add more value to pupil outcomes than the average for Wales. The average capped point score (average of best eight GCSE results per pupil) and the level 2 threshold inclusive of English/Welsh and mathematics are both significantly above the national average.

Performance at Post 16 is strong overall.

There is a greater proportion schools in the Welsh Government standards groups 1 and 2 in Bridgend primary and secondary schools than nationally and inspection outcomes generally compare well against the other local authorities in the consortium.

Attendance is a particular strength in Bridgend with secondary attendance being above the national average for the last three years and in rank 8 position in 2016; primary and special attendance being above the national average for the last two years and in rank 6 position in 2016. Fewer pupils in Bridgend are persistently absent (less than 80% attendance) than in Wales.

The schools in which there were dips in performance have been identified through the national categorization process and are being provided with additional support and monitoring. As a result there are more amber category school in Bridgend in 2016/17.

An audit has been developed to help schools evaluate their existing practice in relation to using the Pupil Deprivation Grant and identify ways in which use of the grant can be improved. The Central South Consortium have an extensive knowledge bank of good practice that can be used to share good practice between schools to support the areas identified through the audit. Challenge advisers will be supporting all schools with this process this year.

The areas for improvement that have been identified above have been shared with Central South Consortium which has built relevant actions into the business plan.

### **Challenge and support provided by the Consortium on behalf of Bridgend Local Authority**

20. In 2016/17 Bridgend Local Authority spent £692,350 on core funding on the consortium function. In addition to the core costs of the consortium this has provided funding for the challenge advisers plus support for Schools Challenge Cymru adviser and senior challenge adviser.
21. Inspection outcomes during 2015/16 include: 7 schools were inspected with 5 judged to be good, 1 was judged to be good and excellent and 1 was placed in special measures.
22. Elected Members will be aware that we use a categorisation process to identify the schools in need of support using both data and judgement of leadership and capacity to improve. During 2015/16, the consortium worked closely on behalf of the Local Authority to monitor the progress of the schools in need, two schools required 'red' level of support and four schools required 'amber' level of support.
23. Challenge advisers have a relevant educational background and level of experience and are providing good quality support and challenge to schools. They have continued to work well and in partnership with the local authority to provide effective monitoring, challenge, support and intervention where needed. Challenge advisers have commissioned bespoke support and intervention from the wider support teams within the Central South Consortium.
24. More broadly support provided by the consortium to schools in Bridgend has included:
  - a. Retained EIG partly funds literacy and numeracy support.
  - b. 42 schools, comprising of the primary and secondary sectors within Bridgend have accessed professional development programmes provided by Hub schools across the

- region. Bridgend schools involved in providing support as part of the Hub programme have provided curriculum, provisional learning and lead practitioner programmes.
- c. Five schools have provided lead school pathfinder support.
  - d. The majority of Bridgend schools have been involved in SIG working, and during 2015/16 SIGs including Bridgend schools have focused on: literacy, numeracy, teaching and pedagogy, pupil voice, ICT and digital curriculum framework and assessment. SIGs are reviewed annually and have to provide a report on their priorities and impact against their priorities twice a year in order to be funded.
  - e. Six Bridgend schools have engaged in the peer enquiry programme, which supports Headteachers working in triads to review and evaluate focus areas in each school and then providing a detailed report on the strengths and areas for improvement. Nine other schools have engaged in a Cluster based version of the peer enquiry programme.
  - f. The consortium has invested heavily in leadership provision in the 2015/16 year. This has included opportunities to support another school with leadership capacity or coaching, leadership of school to school provision and direct leadership programmes. Of these, 9 Headteachers have undertaken the New to Headship programme; 1 Headteacher has undertaken the Strategic Headship programme; 7 Headteachers have completed the Consultant Headship programme; there have been 6 successful NPQH applicants and a number of Heads are being funded to mentor other future leaders as part of building leadership capacity;
  - g. There has been one Schools Challenge Cymru Adviser in Bridgend and in addition the Foundation Phase, Welsh in Education, Hwb+ and Qualified for Life teams based in school improvement hubs have also supported Bridgend schools as part of their grant funded operation.

### **Additional support requested through the Local Authority Annex**

25. In Bridgend the authority has also requested specific support in the following areas:

Local Authority Annex 2015-2016:

- a) Support schools to develop good and excellent aspects of teaching and learning.
- b) Strengthen the teaching of Welsh first language at level 5 and above.
- c) Continue support for the non-maintained Foundation Phase.
- d) Provide ICT technical support for schools in relation to using SIMs to record pupil targets.

### **Where is it working well for Bridgend schools and areas for further improvement?**

#### **Strengths**

- Attainment at KS3 at expected levels of performance.
- The performance of girls in the FP.
- The performance of boys and girls in KS3.
- The performance of boys and girls in KS4.
- The performance of non FSM pupils in KS4.
- Attendance.

## Areas for improvement

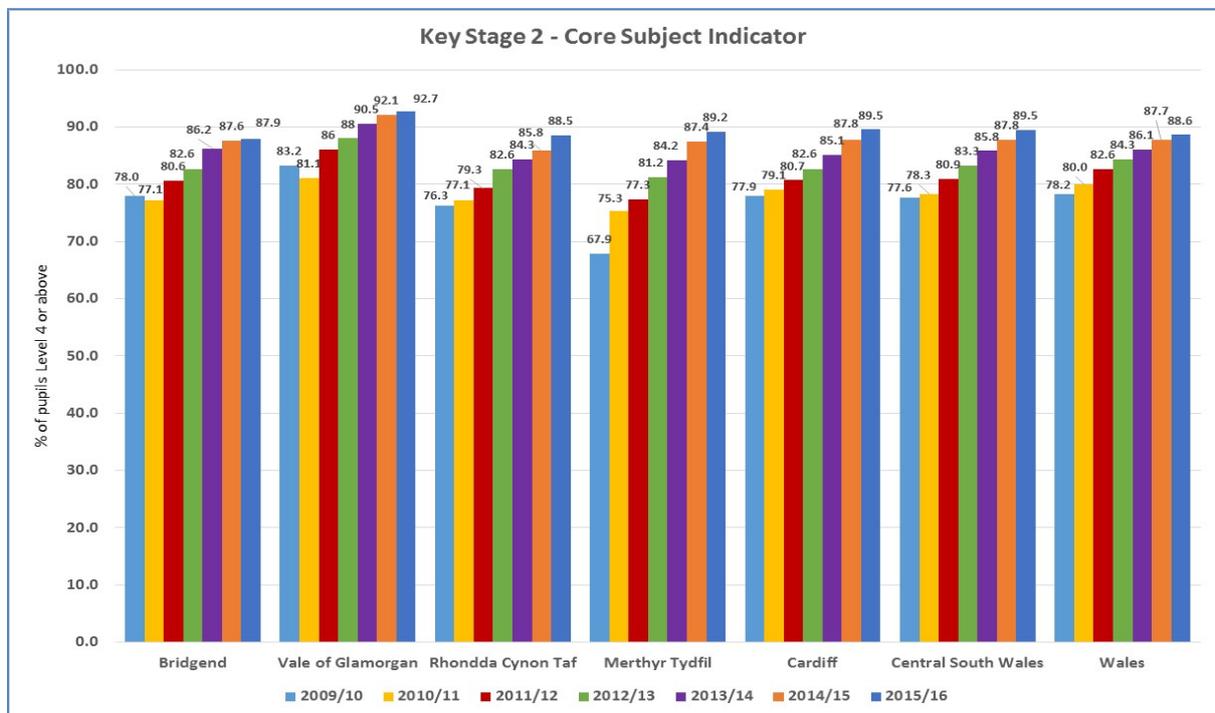
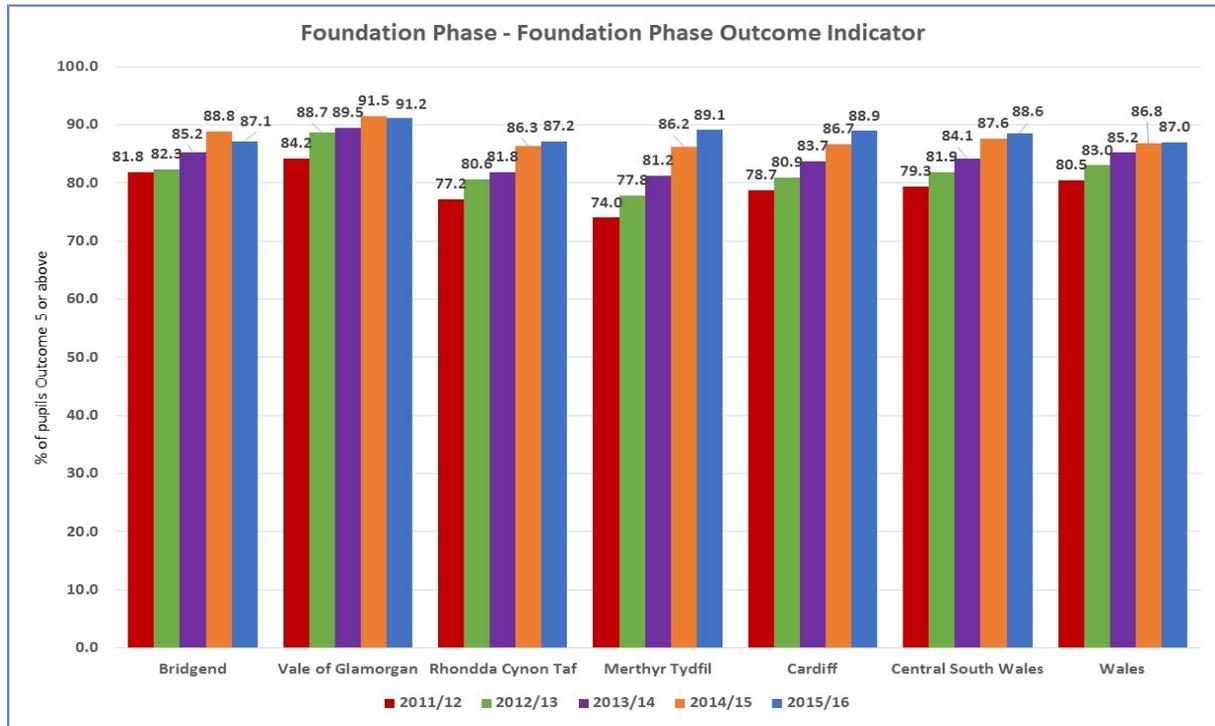
- Raising attainment in the Foundation Phase (FP) in PSDWCD at the expected and higher than expected outcomes.
- Improving tracking and intervention in FP so that more pupils achieve all three areas of learning at the expected outcome.
- Raising attainment at KS2 at the expected and higher than expected level of attainment.
- Improving the attainment of e-FSM pupils at KS2.
- Achieving consistent improvement in the attainment of e-FSM pupils at KS4.

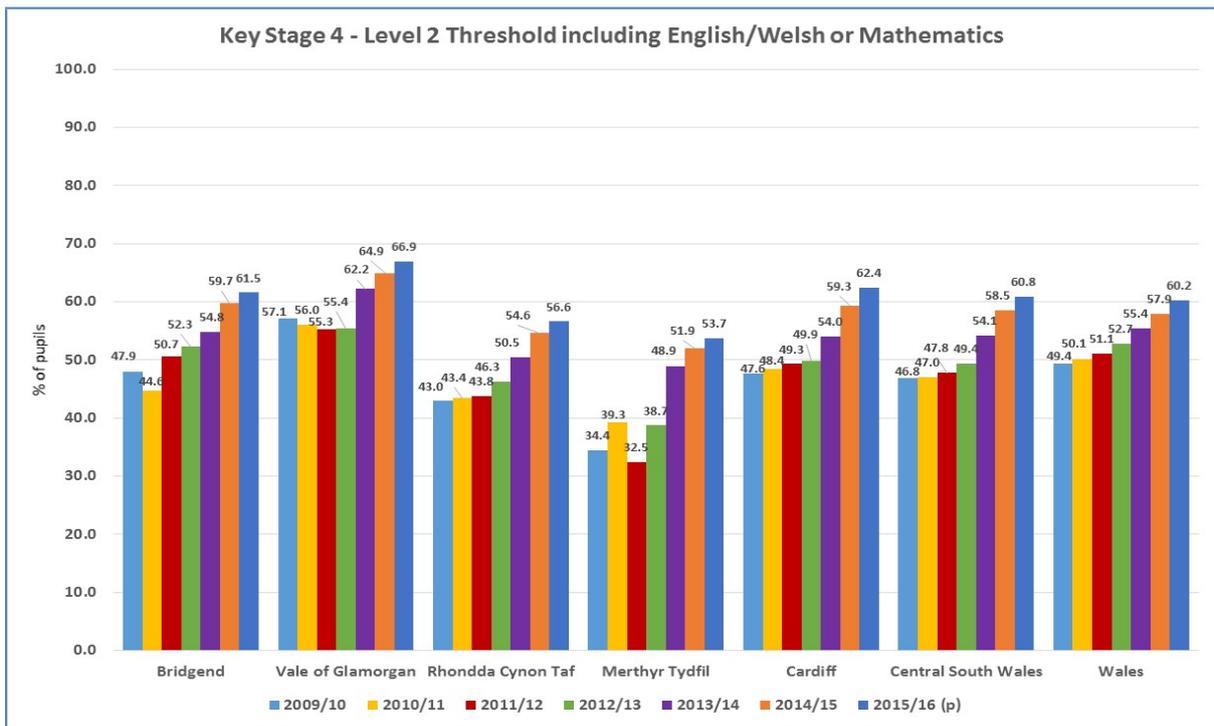
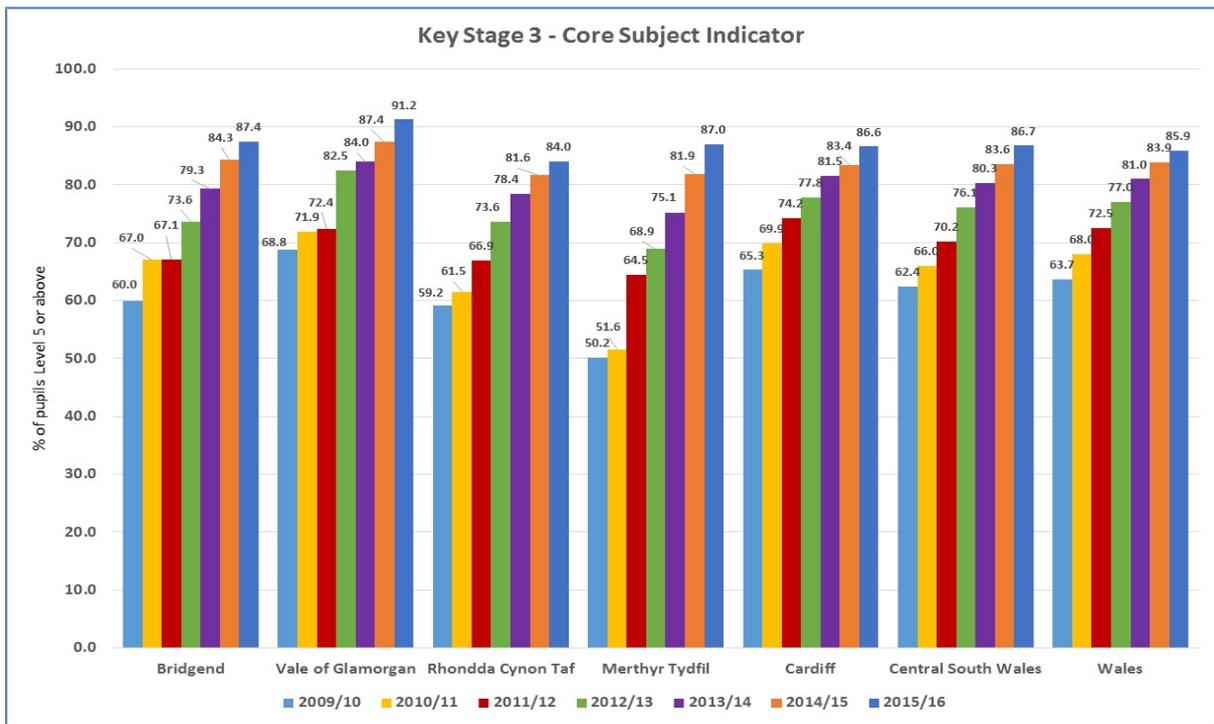
26. There are a number of issues which the Central South Consortium need to make faster progress on:

- Continued focus on the achievement of pupils eligible for free school meals in Bridgend and across the region;
- Analysis of key stage 2 and 3 tests has indicated variation of teacher assessment and moderation. The national approach to verification of teacher assessment has been shown to be rigorous and impactful, this will continue to be an area of focus for 2016-2017;
- Continue to work with all Human Resource departments and governor support teams to embed consistency and quality advice for schools regardless of where they are in the region;
- Improved use of information systems across the region through the development of Cronfa as a single point of information for schools, Local Authorities and consortium colleagues across the region.

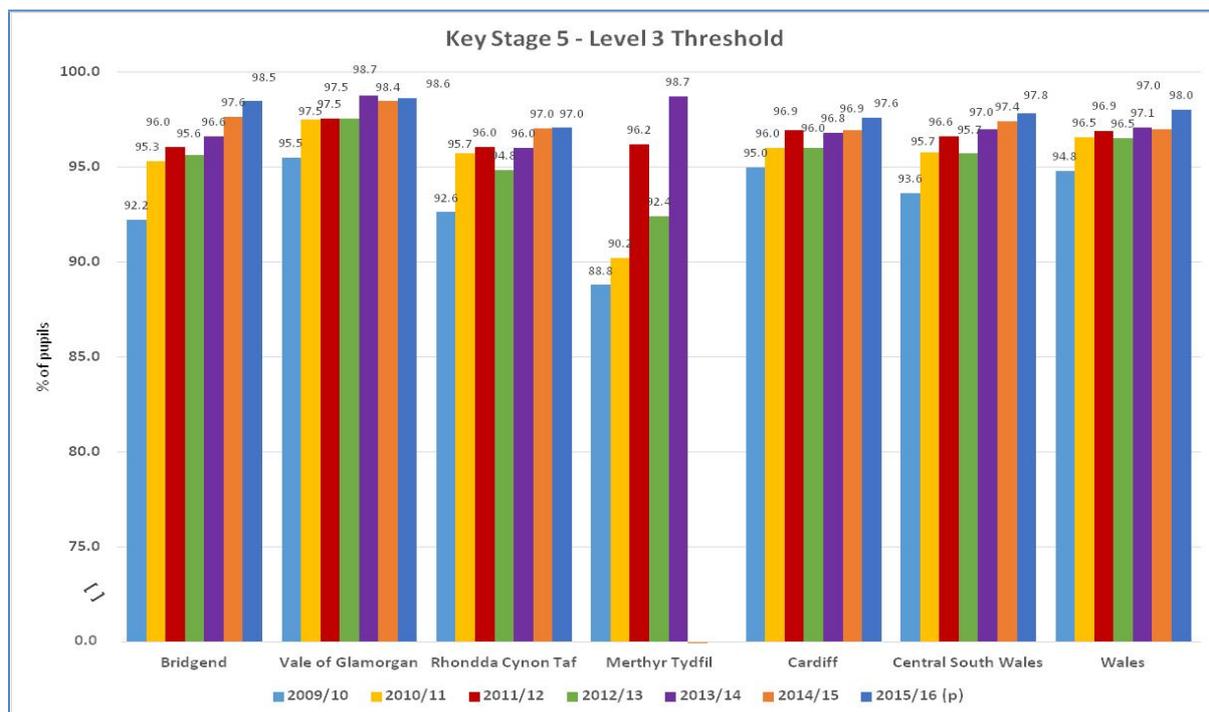
## Annex: Headline results across the Central South region 2015/16

Outcomes in the first four key stages have risen across the region, although not in every local authority in the Foundation Phase, and sit above the national average at Key Stages 1-4 for the first time.

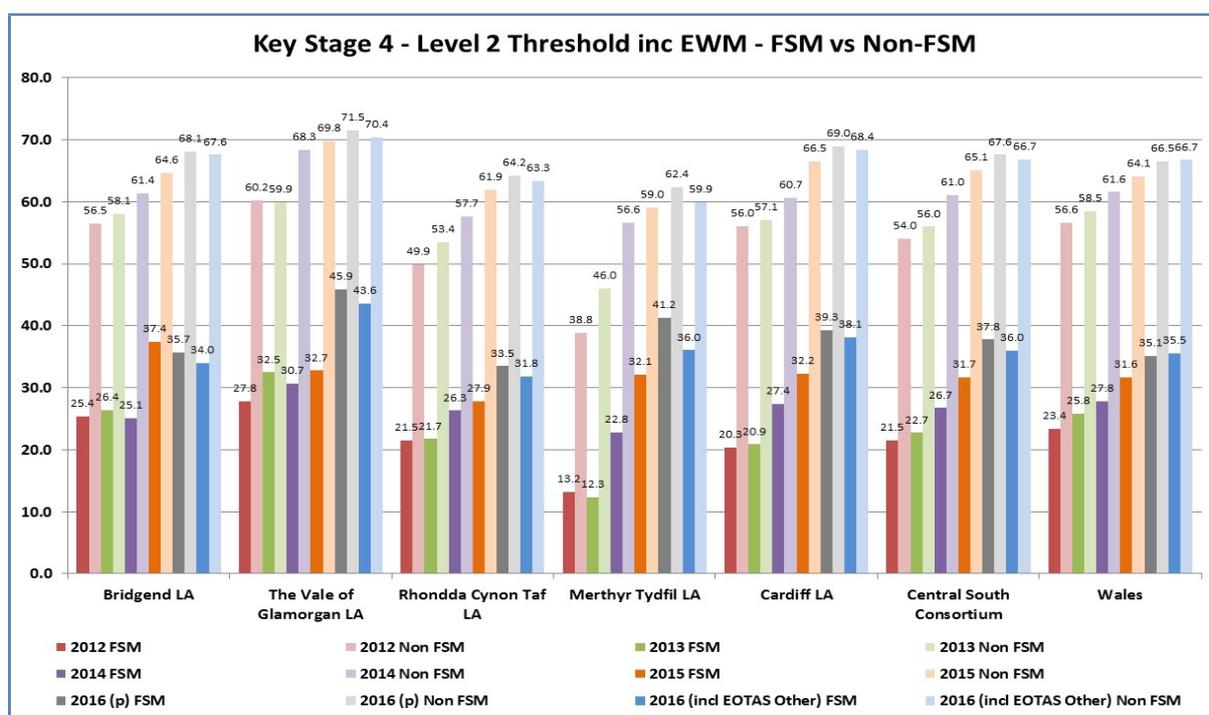




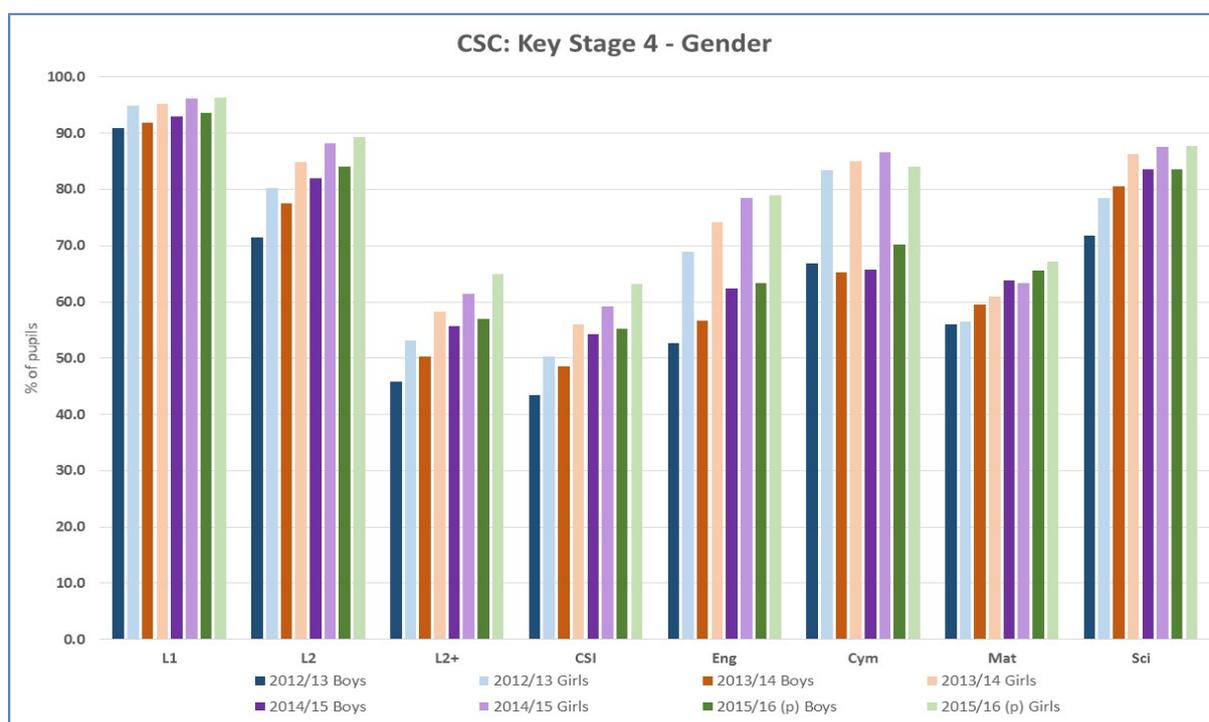
There is further work to do at Key Stage 5 (in school sixth forms) across the region. NB: MTBC has post 16 provision provided by the FE sector which is not included here.



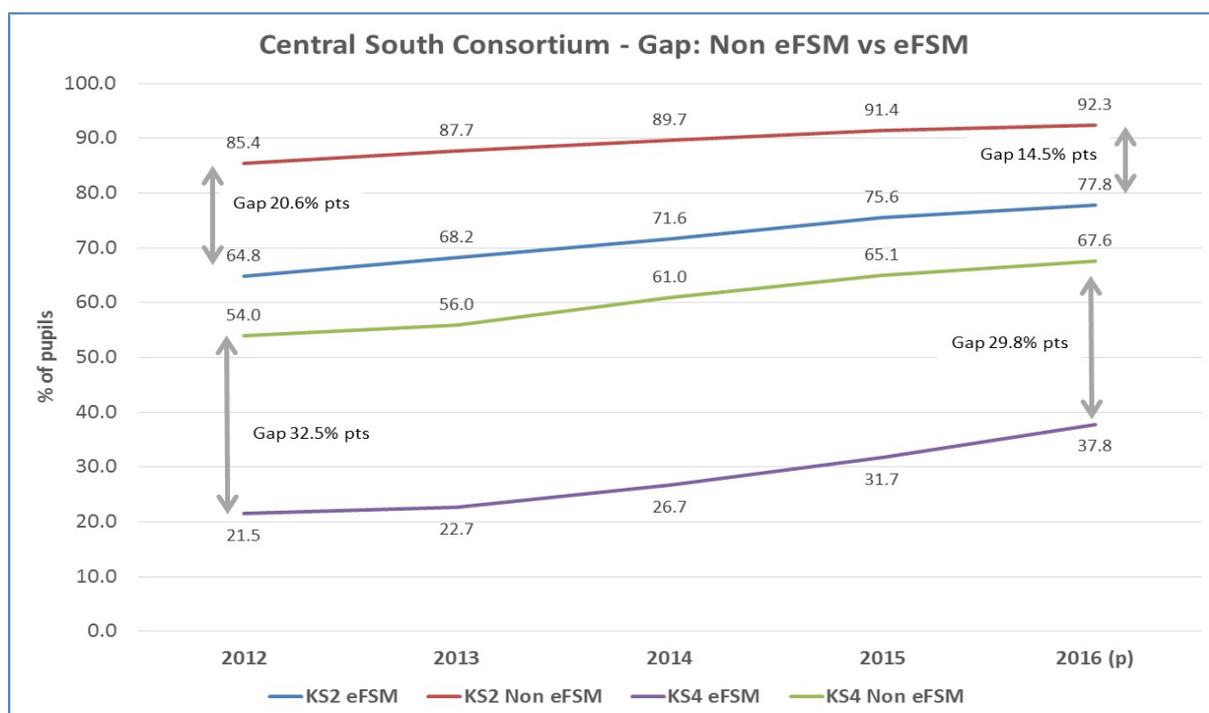
The performance of children claiming free school meals (e-FSM) has improved in each local authority, however, the gap remains stark compared with children not claiming free school meals (non e-FSM).



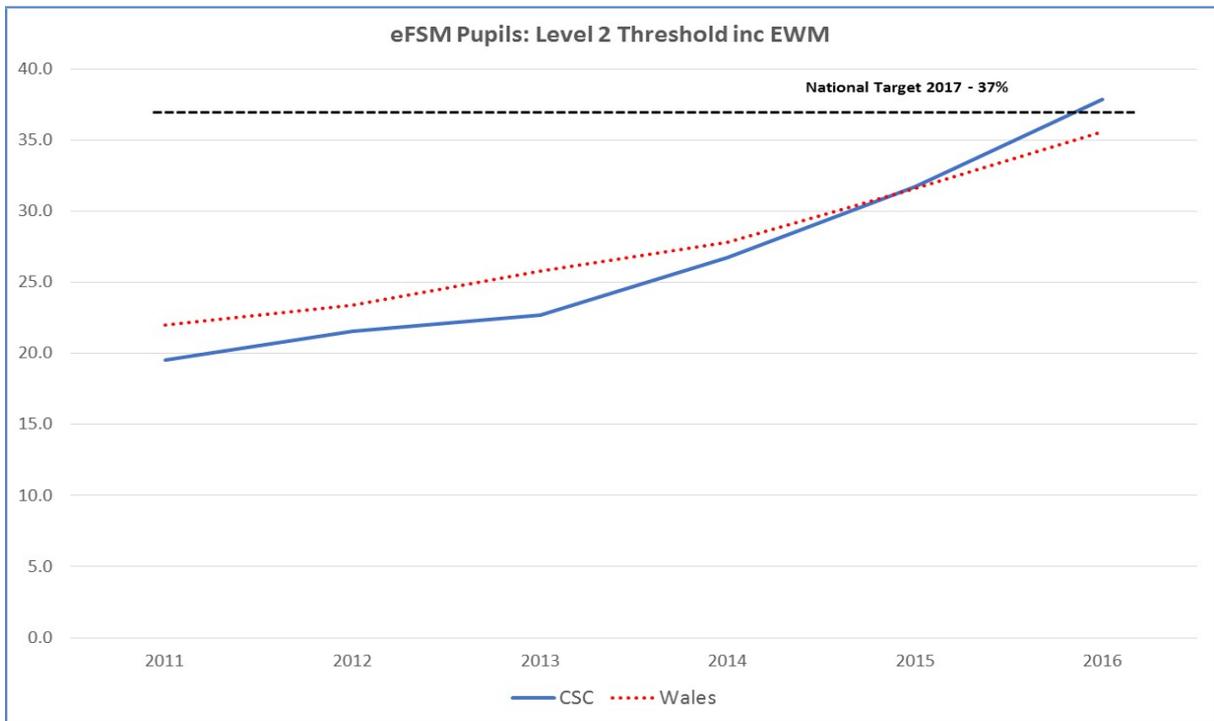
There are particular issues across the region relating to boys' performance in literacy/English/Welsh, and girls' performance in mathematics/numeracy which are first identified within the Foundation Phase and continue to the end of Key Stage 4.



The gap between the performance of pupil's e-FSM and their peers is narrowing at both primary and secondary levels, albeit too slowly in the secondary sector.



The outcomes of e-FSM pupils' have improved at a faster rate across this region and sits above the National Average and exceed the Welsh governments' target a year early.



Schools in all contexts have improved against the trend position in 2014/15 but there still remains some schools which need to make significant and rapid improvements. Two Bridgend schools are performing in line with modelled expectations based on the three year average FSM eligibility and the rest are exceeding the modelled expectations.

