

Meeting of the Education and Youth Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

9 February 2026

Responses to Recommendations / Additional Information Requested

	Recommendations / Information Requested:	Response:	Accepted / Partially Accepted / Not Accepted:
<b>Teaching and Learning</b>			
<b>Recommendation</b>			
1	<p>The Committee <b>recommended</b> that consideration be given to strengthening the link between the School Improvement Group and the Committee by sharing the RAG status of schools confidentially to Members with more information about the evaluation mechanism, in order to provide assurance about its effectiveness.</p>	<p>The information contained within the performance and financial monitoring database is confidential and should be interpreted with care. While the RAG status provides a useful snapshot, it does not always fully reflect the context within individual schools.</p> <p>RAG judgements can change frequently as circumstances evolve. For example, where a headteacher returns following a planned medical absence, the context that informed the original RAG assessment may no longer apply. Without this contextual understanding, there is a risk that the RAG status alone could be misinterpreted.</p> <p>For this reason, the accompanying narrative is the most important source of information. It provides essential context to support professional judgement and helps ensure that decisions are</p>	<b>Not accepted</b>

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		informed by a fuller understanding of each school's circumstances, some of which may be confidential.	
<b>Additional Information Requested</b>			
<b>2</b>	<p>The Committee discussed the focus of the report being on examples of schools with Estyn Spotlights and schools required to address Estyn Recommendations to avoid going into special measures and <b>requested</b> an analysis of all Estyn recommendations including schools across the County not falling into the two categories focussed on in this report, to identify any themes or trends.</p>	<p>Since inspections recommenced in May 2022, a total of 47 school inspections have taken place across the local authority. Of these, three schools were placed into a statutory follow-up category.</p> <p>Following the introduction of the new inspection framework in September 2024, a further 22 interim inspections have been completed. As a result, in the 20 months since the framework was introduced, 44 schools have received either a core inspection or an interim visit.</p> <p>There is ongoing analysis of inspection recommendations at local authority, regional and national level. This provides a clear overview of emerging themes and priority areas for development across schools, and supports a strategic and consistent approach to school improvement.</p>	<b>Information provided</b>

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		<p>The findings from this analysis are discussed regularly at meetings involving officers who work directly with schools. This ensures that intelligence from inspection and review activity is used systematically to inform professional dialogue, challenge and support at both school and local authority level.</p> <p>Inspection intelligence is also shared with the Central South Consortium (CSC), in its role as the regional professional learning body. This helps to shape the regional professional learning offer and informs the development of targeted support and resources for schools.</p> <p>As a result of this ongoing analysis, specific actions are taken to support improvement. For example, a range of professional learning and support resources has been developed to strengthen effective self-evaluation in schools. This includes an online resource hub featuring case studies of effective practice. Professional learning is provided for school leadership teams, cluster leaders and wider groups of school leaders, with a</p>	

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		<p>clear focus on improving the quality of self-evaluation.</p> <p>Additional resources have also been developed to support schools in reviewing and strengthening provision for the development of learners' skills.</p> <p>There is a range of professional learning provided by Central South Consortium to support developments in teaching. In the last two full academic years, every school within the local authority has engaged in the regional professional learning programme for Curriculum and Teaching.</p> <p>A comparison is made between inspection recommendations and schools' identified priorities. This enables the local authority to identify any significant variance and ensure that school improvement planning is well aligned with local, regional and national expectations.</p> <p>Analysis of inspection recommendations is shared regularly with school leaders through a range of established networks.</p>	

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		<b>Recommendation Theme</b>	<b>Number of Schools</b>	
		<b>Teaching &amp; Learning (inc. Challenge, Independence &amp; Feedback)</b>  Includes improving overall consistency, increasing challenge for pupils, and refining assessment/feedback to identify next steps.	23	
		<b>Leadership, Self-Evaluation &amp; Governance</b>  Sharpen processes to focus on the impact of provision on pupil outcomes and learning, and strengthen leadership/governance accountability.	18	
		<b>Literacy &amp; Writing Skills</b>	16	

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3	The Committee <b>requested</b> details regarding the self-evaluation process, including support for schools to identify their strategic priorities especially in the	The local authority implements the national model for school improvement. Under this model, schools lead their own improvement through regular	<b>Information provided</b>								

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	run-up to an Estyn inspection, and any review process between agreeing the strategic priorities and implementation.	<p>self-evaluation and planning. This is a continuous cycle rather than a one-off event. Effective self-evaluation supports schools to develop a culture of ongoing learning and enables them to adapt their approaches in response to evidence.</p> <p>Schools are expected to triangulate a wide range of evidence, including lesson observations, learner voice, assessment data and relevant contextual information, to inform evaluation and identify clear improvement priorities.</p> <p>This self-evaluation process is supported by improvement partners, professional learning advisers from the Central South Consortium (CSC), and other external partners where appropriate. This ensures that strategic priorities are robust, evidence-based and aligned with wider local, regional and national expectations. School leaders and governing bodies remain accountable for improving learning within their own school and for creating an inclusive ethos that meets the diverse needs of all learners.</p>	

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		<p>The Education (School Development Plan) (Wales) Regulations 2014 identify two overarching national priorities that should underpin all improvement activity: improving learners’ progression by ensuring access to a broad range of knowledge, skills and experiences, and reducing the impact of poverty on learners’ progression and attainment. These priorities are closely interconnected and require collaborative action across the education system.</p> <p>Improvement partners meet with school leaders to discuss school development plans and identify support requirements. As a result of these discussions, bespoke support is commissioned from the Central South Consortium. This support takes different forms, depending on the identified needs and context of the school.</p> <p>Once fully developed, the school development plan (SDP) is presented to the governing body for approval. The plan should be informed by ongoing reflection, professional dialogue and honest self-evaluation. It should include a manageable number of clearly defined priorities, incorporating</p>	

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		<p>both short-term and longer-term objectives, and focus on securing sustainable improvement.</p> <p>While the SDP covers a three-year period, it must include sufficient detail for the current academic year and set out high-level priorities for Years 2 and 3. Some priorities may be achieved within a single year, while others require sustained action over a longer period.</p> <p>Importantly, the SDP should not promote a culture of continually moving on to new initiatives. Sustaining improvement is often more challenging than initiating it. Schools should therefore use ongoing evaluation and structured knowledge-sharing to determine whether actions are having the intended impact. Improvement partners participate in self-evaluation activity alongside school leaders to quality assure processes and judgements. Where priorities are not having sufficient impact, schools are expected to pause, reflect and adapt their plans accordingly.</p> <p>The SDP is a central focus of improvement partner meetings with school leaders. Progress and impact</p>	

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		<p>against each strategic priority are reviewed through self-evaluation evidence, and progress is formally monitored on a termly basis.</p> <p>A culture of openness, in which challenges are acknowledged and explored, is essential to securing meaningful and sustained improvement.</p> <p>Schools receive only ten days' notification of an Estyn inspection, and inspection intervals across the local authority vary significantly, ranging from six to over nine years. This reinforces the importance of maintaining a continuous focus on improvement rather than responding reactively to inspection activity.</p> <p>To support this, improvement partners work in partnership with school leaders on an annual basis to ensure that strategic priorities remain accurate, evidence-based and responsive to the school's current context. This collaborative approach strengthens self-evaluation and ensures that school development plans are sharply focused, evaluative and effective in driving improvement.</p>	

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<b>Information Report – Corporate Performance Quarter 2 2025-26</b>			
<b>Recommendations</b>			
<b>4</b>	The Committee expressed concern regarding the red and amber RAG status and the timescales of most Commitments in WBO 3.4 <i>Modernise School Buildings</i> and discussed their impact on Commitment WBO4.4.2 <i>to develop a five-year plan to meet increasing demand on support services, specialist provision and schools</i> , highlighting the length of waiting lists in this area and the number of learners who remain on waiting lists, and <b>recommended</b> that these matters be added to the Committee’s Forward Work Programme (FWP).	Actioned by Scrutiny, Chair of Committee and Corporate Director in Work Planning Meeting and added to scope of the <b>Review of Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Support</b> report on Committee’s FWP.	Accepted
<b>5</b>	The Committee expressed concern regarding the continued red status and poor performance against Performance Indicator DEFS170 regarding the percentage of new local authority individual development plans (IDPs) delivered using the online IDP system	Actioned by Scrutiny, Chair of Committee and Corporate Director in Work Planning Meeting and added to scope of the <b>Review of Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Support</b> report on Committee’s FWP.	Accepted

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	and <b>recommended</b> that this be added to the Committee's FWP.		
<b>Forward Work Programme Update</b>			
<b>6</b>	<u>Referral from Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 23 October 2025.</u> The Committee <b>recommended</b> that the issue regarding the number of schools projecting a deficit budget and the extent of the deficits should be considered as part of the budget process, including the work of the Scrutiny Budget Working Group, for 2026-27.	Scrutiny to action with Scrutiny Budget Working Group	Accepted
<b>7</b>	<u>Referral from Social Service, Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 6 November 2025.</u> With regard to the concerns expressed about the level of contact Home Educated learners may have with the Local Authority, the Committee <b>recommended</b> that, in the first instance, an all-Member briefing be scheduled.	Actioned by Scrutiny, Chair of Committee and Corporate Director in Work Planning Meeting and added to Committee's FWP.	Accepted