

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

INFORMATION REPORT TO CABINET

6 SEPTEMBER 2016

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR- EDUCATION AND FAMILY SUPPORT

Estyn Report of Central South Consortium

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to present the findings of the Estyn Report on the Central South Consortium.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities

- 2.1 The information in this report relates to the strategic priority in the Corporate Plan 'supporting a successful economy'.

3. Background

- 3.1 Consortia were established by the previous Labour government in 2012 and have taken some time to become established across Wales. Consortia are funded to deliver school improvement services on behalf of Local Authorities. This means providing challenge and support in the form of a Challenge Adviser to each school and commissioning sources of support for schools to draw upon in their improvement planning.
- 3.2 Central South Consortium covers 400 schools across Wales and over a third of the children in Wales. It is one of the most deprived regions in Wales and in 2012 it was one of the lowest performing regions. All five constituent authorities, Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr, Rhondda Cynon Taf and the Vale of Glamorgan were in a form of Estyn monitoring.
- 3.3 Since 2012 the region has seen the fastest improvement of any in Wales. Results in all key stages have risen to or above the national average and the pace of improvement at key stage four has been more than double that seen nationally. At the same time all five authorities have been removed from monitoring by Estyn and in all cases the contribution of the Consortium was noted.
- 3.4 In 2014 the five authorities in Central South Consortium launched "The Central South Wales Challenge" which set out a school led strategy for improvement. This was designed to identify and support schools to lead improvement across the region at both a system level and at a school level. At the same time there were changes to the challenge adviser function and many more seconded head teachers were encouraged to become challenge advisers.
- 3.5 Estyn inspected the Central South Consortium in March 2016. It was the first Consortium to be inspected under a new Consortia Inspection Framework.

- 3.6 The report was mostly positive recognising the scale of improvement across schools within the Central South region since the Consortium working began in Wales in 2012. It gave 'good' judgements for leadership, self evaluation and improvement planning and partnerships.
- 3.7 Judgements for support for school improvement and resource management remained 'adequate' which in Estyn terms means 'strengths outweigh areas for improvement'. There were four recommendations for the Consortium to take on board ahead of a likely revisit by Estyn in the Autumn of 2017.
- 3.8 The Consortium was the first of the four consortia to be inspected. All four have now been inspected.
- 3.9 The inspection took two weeks and involved 9 inspectors. More than 50 head teachers and governors were interviewed as were all Council Leaders and Cabinet Members, Chief Executives, Directors, S.151 officers, the senior team of the Consortium and many staff. The inspection was supported by a survey of all head teachers and governors, to which more than 50% of schools responded, which was undertaken in January.
- 3.10 The report (Appendix A) was published on the 26th May and it is expected that all consortia will be revisited to measure progress against their recommendations from the autumn of 2017 onwards.

4. Current situation / proposal

- 4.1 The report made five judgements within its framework with a context section on performance and outcomes. Against each area the judgements were:-
 - a. Support for School Improvement – adequate
 - b. Leadership – good
 - c. Improving Quality – good
 - d. Partnerships – good
 - e. Resource Management – adequate
- 4.2 The report recognised the rapid improvement across the five authorities in the region, the fastest improvement nationally and that the Consortium was now sitting at or above the national average in all indicators. However, it also noted that performance across the local authorities is "too variable".

"In 2015, over half of the schools in the region are in the higher 50% when their performance is compared to that of similar schools for all the main indicators in the Foundation Phase and key stages 2, 3 and 4. This is the only region where this is the case. Overall, performance in this region has improved at a faster rate than in the other regions over the last three years, although for several indicators this has been from a low base."
- 4.3 The report recognised a number of areas of strength in the way that Consortium operates and delivers impact. In particular it noted:-
 - a. Increased consistency and quality of challenge advisers, use of data and implementation of the categorisation process;

- b. The wide range of professional learning opportunities for schools across the region delivered as part of the self improving school system;
- c. Effective leadership and appropriate governance of the Consortium by the five authorities working together;
- d. Effective self evaluation and improving planning processes reflected in the Consortium Business Plan 2016/17;
- e. Clarity of vision and strategy within the self improving school system strategy work and the strength of engagement with head teachers and authorities, also the effective use of resources.

“The consortium has a clear vision and strategy to improve schools that is understood by most stakeholders and underpins the support for school improvement well. Almost all schools across the regions are engaging purposefully with schools-to-school working.”

“Over the last two years, the consortium has developed into a reflective organisation that is committed to evaluating and improving its own practice and performance.”

- 4.4 There were also a number of areas for improvement in the four recommendations within the report. These were to:-
- 1. Ensure that school improvement services address the variability of performance across schools and local authorities, particularly at key stage 4.
 - 2. Improve the accuracy of the evaluations of schools by Challenge Advisers in order to ensure a greater focus on improving teaching and leadership.
 - 3. Strengthen the procedures for monitoring and evaluating the impact of school improvement work.
 - 4. Evaluate progress against the regional consortium’s operational plans more effectively.
- 4.5 The Consortium has reviewed action plans against the recommendations and added to them where necessary. Attached at Appendix B is a summary of each of the recommendations with actions and impact against them. These sit within the business plan and are monitored monthly as part of our self evaluation processes.
- 4.6 Following the inspection, stakeholders and Directors in the region carried out a stocktake to review progress and to identify further areas where focus was needed. These included:-
- a. A need for a focus on strengthening leadership succession planning and future leadership capacity also recruitment of core subject (mathematics particularly) teachers in the region;
 - b. A focus on developing pedagogy and joint practice development at teacher level through school to school working;
 - c. A focus on engagement in particular with teachers, governors and elected Members about the role of the consortia and impact to schools which do not make sufficiently rapid progress;
 - d. A focus on consistent intervention and a sharp response to schools which do not make sufficiently rapid progress;
 - e. A need to review the role of challenge advisers with a view to increasing impact and sharpening reporting;

- f. A need to engage with pace on national strategies and agendas in the region in a way that builds capacity and streamlines change management.
- 4.7 Actions arising from these areas have also been reflected in our action plans underpinning the business plan which are monitored monthly.
- 4.8 There are risks to the delivery of these recommendations in the next year particularly including:-
- a. The implementation of the new qualification for core subjects at key stage 4 may well destabilise the improvement seen across the region hitting schools which serve deprived areas hardest. This is being monitored and we are working with these schools particularly to support their planning;
 - b. Leadership capacity and particularly capacity to recruit core subject staff remains a significant issue for the region. The four consortia are working together on a national recruitment campaign for the autumn;
 - c. National priorities change as the new government establishes itself leading to reduced impact and a need to further communicate strategies and progress;
 - d. Financial resources remain tight and will become more so. The Consortium is taking a small cut to revenue resources in 2016/17 and 2017/18 and judge this to be manageable, but major changes to grant will affect our ability to deliver school to school strategies for improvement. We are working with Welsh Government to reflect and address these issues within the context of increasing delegation to schools.
- 4.9 These risks are on the Consortium's risk register and being monitored closely.
- 4.10 The Consortium has reviewed action plans as set out in this report and will report against progress to the Advisory Board and the Joint Committee termly.
- 4.11 Each Scrutiny Committee also receives an annual report in the late autumn / early spring term from the Consortium which will also focus on progress against these recommendations.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules

- 5.1 There is no impact on the Council's policy framework or procedure rules.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

- 6.1 There are no equality impact implications arising from this report.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this information report.

8. Recommendation

- 8.1 Cabinet should note the inspection report and recommendations (Appendix A) and the actions to address recommendations (Appendix B).

Deborah McMillan
Director of Education and Family Support

Telephone: (01656) 642612

E-mail: Deborah.McMillan@bridgend.gov.uk

Postal Address Education and Family Support Directorate
Bridgend County Borough Council
Civic Offices
Angel Street
Bridgend
CF31 4WB

Appendices:-

Appendix A Estyn published report for Central South Consortium
Appendix B Summary table of recommendations, actions and impact.