

### Draft Self-Evaluation

#### Current performance:

- Performance at all key stages has improved in recent years.
- The percentage of learners leaving school without a qualification and the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) are low.
- Public confidence in local education is the highest in Wales. People in Flintshire gave the highest rating for the state of education in the 2014 National Survey for Wales. This public confidence demonstration also evidences a collective interest in the education of our young people by all sectors.
- In 2013 secondary schools, 62.2 per cent of 16 year-olds gained five or more good GCSE grades that included Mathematics and English or Welsh (first language). This compares to 45.2% on the equivalent indicator in 2008. This 2013 result was the highest of all councils in Wales and almost 10 percentage points above the average for Wales representing a move from 10<sup>th</sup> to 1<sup>st</sup> in Local Authority ranking. Although the 2014 figure is marginally lower, it is expected to maintain a position in which Flintshire's ranking has been above its expected level in every year since 2009.
- The Authority has also ranked higher than its expected position in the percentage of learners achieving the Core Subject Indicator (CSI) at Key Stage 4 in every year since 2009.
- Support for additional learning needs and social inclusion is good.
- The trend in attendance in both primary and secondary schools is good with an upward trend of improvement. There are few permanent exclusions and some innovative prevention programmes to support schools to engage pupils to retain good attendance, e.g. work with traveller community by Youth Services Staff.
- The Authority has made good progress in developing its School Modernisation programme and can evidence engagement of stakeholders in the early stages of consultation.
- Senior leaders understand clearly the impact of wellbeing, safeguarding and regeneration on educational outcomes.

#### **However:**

- The proportion of schools requiring follow-up activity after an inspection is still too high in comparison with other authorities.

- We remain committed to securing continuous improvement in all phases of education, whilst maintaining the rigour of assessment and moderation. Nevertheless, the focus remains on improving learner outcomes in primary schools.
- Schools need to focus on further developing Welsh 1st language and performance of pupils in National Tests.

### **Capacity to Improve:**

- Key plans align well at all levels and senior leaders work in a positive way with a range of strategic partners across public services and third sector to set high level priorities together.
- The Authority and its partners have a clear commitment to learners and developing a learning culture in the county.
- The Authority has a track record of identifying and intervening where hurdles to effective working hinder progress.
- Senior leaders have taken difficult decisions which are responded to proactively.
- The Authority analyses data and first-hand evidence well to make accurate evaluations of the quality and impact of services and monitor trends and unmet needs.
- The Authority has addressed all of the recommendations from previous Estyn inspections well.
- The Authority has a good record of effectively managing its education budget and improving efficiency and utilising additional external grants to enhance our offer.
- Scrutiny has examined difficult aspects of the authority's work successfully, and has informed decision making by the Cabinet well.
- The collaborative arrangements for School Improvement in North Wales are maturing and are beginning to "add value" to local educational provision.
- Scrutiny has examined difficult aspects of the Authority's work successfully, and has informed decision making by the Cabinet well.

### **However:**

- The Authority still needs to take further key decisions in relation to school organisation to deliver efficient use of resources to benefit learners.
- The Authority needs to have successfully implemented major organisational and service change to meet budgetary constraints for forthcoming years.

## ***Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?***

### ***Quality Indicator: 1.1 Standards***

#### **Outcomes:**

- Results and trends in performance compared with national averages, similar providers and prior attainment
- Standards of groups of learners
- Skills
- Welsh language

Performance against headline attainment indicators over the last three years has, overall, been below our expected levels at Foundation and Key Stage 2. However, almost all key indicators are on a steady improvement trend. Compared to 2013 there were slight dips in performance in Mathematical Development at Foundation Phase as well as Welsh and Science at Key Stage 2. In the Foundation Phase Outcome Indicator (FPOI) and Core Subject Indicator (CSI) 2014 performance improved on the previous year, with progress made by both boys and girls. Flintshire's rate of improvement is not as fast as Wales, however, is based on evidenced confidence that schools' assessment methodologies are robust and accurate.

Improving primary school outcomes remains a key priority within the Council's Education Improvement and Modernisation Strategy. A new target setting tool has been introduced to primary schools from October 2014 to support them in this process to ensure effective use of data and encourage high aspirations to improve future performance.

At Key Stage 3 outcomes continued the trend of improvement in 2014 with county aggregate outcomes higher than in 2013 in all subjects other than the small cohort assessed in Welsh 1<sup>st</sup> Language. Improvement and outcomes exceeding targets were secured in English, Maths, Science, CSI, CSI (boys) and CSI (girls). Outcomes in CSI ranked in 5<sup>th</sup> position in Wales. Outcomes were both improved and above target in seven non-core subjects, whilst in the other two outcomes were improved and within 0.5% of target.

At Key Stage 4 in 2013 our positions were Level 2+ 1st, CSI 2nd, L1 9th, L2 10th and AWPS 8th. Provisional data for 2014 indicates that outcomes are below the aspirational targets set by schools and in some indicators are below the outcomes in 2013. A contributory factor is the number of learners who find it difficult to maintain their place in mainstream schools. Targeting engagement and improving outcomes for this cohort has been the focus of all non-ringsfenced resources available through the 14-19 grant in 2014-15.

"Achievement and entitlement to free school meals in Wales 2013" reports the percentage achieving the Level 2+ indicator in Flintshire mainstream maintained schools as being at 65% compared to an expected benchmark comparison of 59%. Average Capped Points in

Flintshire is 349 with the benchmark at 350.

The Welsh Government Statistical Bulletin “achievement and entitlement to free school meals in Wales 2013”, published on 22 January 2014 reports Key Stage 3 CSI for mainstream maintained schools in Flintshire as being at 81% compared to an expected benchmark comparison of 82%.

### Flintshire Inspection Outcomes

| Schools Inspections 2013-14                          | Inspection Judgements                         | Follow Up Categories   |
|--|---|--|
| 12 Primary Schools Inspected                         | 8 judged Good/Good<br>1 judged Good/Excellent | 2 invited to submit Excellent practice case studies<br>3 No follow up<br>4 LA Monitoring |
|  | 1 Good/Adequate<br>1 Adequate/Adequate        | 2 Estyn Monitoring   |
|  | 1 Unsatisfactory/Unsatisfactory               | 1 Special Measures   |
| Current Performance<br><br>Prospects for Improvement | Good = 83.3%<br>Good/Excellent = 75%          |  |
| 5 Primary Schools in follow up from 2012-13 cycle    | 3 removed<br>2 remain (revisit due Spring15)  | 2 In Need of Significant Improvement   |
| 1 Secondary School Inspected                         | 1 judged Good/Good                            | Invited to submit Excellent practice case study  |
| Current Performance<br><br>Prospects for Improvement | Good = 100%<br>Good =100%                     |  |
| 2014-15  | Inspection Judgements                         | Follow Up Categories   |
| 2 Primary Schools                                    | 1 Good/Good<br>1 Adequate/Good                | LA Monitoring<br>Estyn Monitoring  |

## Key Question Performance

| Sept 14 – Nov 15                 | Number | %     |
|----------------------------------|--------|-------|
| <b>15 Schools (14 Pri/1 Sec)</b> |        |       |
| Good or Better All 3 KQ          | 11     | 73%   |
| Good or Better KQ1               | 12     | 80%   |
| Good or Better KQ2               | 12     | 80%   |
| Good or Better KQ3               | 12     | 80%   |
| Adequate in 2 or more KQ         | 2      | 13.3% |
| Unsatisfactory in one or more KQ | 1      | 6.6%  |
| Excellent in one or more KQ      | 1      | 6.6%  |

## Comparative Performance across Flintshire Schools

| @ November 2014         | Number | %    |
|-------------------------|--------|------|
| No Follow Up            | 70     | 86.4 |
| LA Monitoring           | 5      | 6.2  |
| Estyn Monitoring        | 3      | 3.7  |
| Significant Improvement | 2      | 2.5  |
| Special Measures        | 1      | 1.2  |
|                         | 81     | 100% |

81 schools in total (67 Primary, 12 Secondary, 2 Specialist)

### Funded Non-Maintained Performance:

Significant progress has been made in Estyn outcomes in the funded non-maintained sector during the last academic year. The Authority has only two settings in Local Authority Monitoring. Out of the nine settings inspected during 2013-14, seven were judged to be good and one of those received two 'Excellent' QIs and was invited to provide an Estyn case study. There are no settings in any other categories. The two settings previously in Focused Intervention, two in Estyn Monitoring and one in Local Authority Monitoring during 2013-14 have all been judged to have made good progress and removed from follow up. A recent visit from a HMI for the thematic review of 10% provision noted Flintshire's excellent

practice and indicated this would feature as a case study in the final report.

Children and young people progress successfully to the next stage in their education and from school to further education, training or employment. The percentage of young people who are NEET has been significantly below average for Wales and has been reducing in years between 2009 and 2014 (with 2013 as an exception). Work to minimise the level of young people not in education, employment and training is a high priority for the Local Service Board's Youth Engagement and Progression Framework. Indications are that the 2014 figure for 16 year old NEETS will be much reduced. Significant improvement has also been secured on the wider indicators of engagement for 16 to 24 year olds.

The trend in participation and attainment in Welsh and Welsh as a second language are improving overall. There was a small increase in the number of learners achieving a Full or Short Course GCSE A\* to C in 2013 compared to 2012 (839 compared to 825) but 53 learners achieved a full NVQ qualification in 2nd Language Welsh and a further 11 achieved Level 2 units, so 903 achieved some success at Level 2 which is 50% of the year group. Opportunities to engage in broader language initiatives within universal services e.g. Youth Services and URDD collaborations have improved and have gained positive evidenced outcomes.

Overall, vulnerable learners and those learners who are at risk of underachievement achieve well. These learners have responded well to targeted interventions which have impacted on standards of wellbeing and consequently outcomes. For example, the percentage of learners leaving school without a qualification has significantly decreased. At key stage 4 the performance of looked after children and learners from traveller families is improving.

Outcomes at Key Stage 4 for the cohort of Flintshire learners who are entitled to FSM are good compared to their counterparts across Wales with the Flintshire outcomes higher than Wales in each of the last three years. In 2013 91.2% of Flintshire FSM learners achieved the L1 threshold compared to 85.8% across Wales. At level 2+ in 2013 the figures were Flintshire 35.7% and Wales 25.8%.

Learners in alternative provision for those not attending school, and those supported by the Integrated Youth Provision Service, gain useful relevant qualifications. Many of these learners develop skills and experiences which help them to continue in education and training. In addition, a good percentage of learners gain accreditation or informal recognition for their participation in the Integrated Youth Provision Service and wider youth support services working within high schools and our specialist grant funded support services and health services.

**Key sources of evidence:**

- Performance data for FP; KS2; KS3; KS4; KS5 + national tests
- LA Core Data Set

**Key issues & challenges:**

- Continue to raise attainment in Key Stage 4, with particular focus on Level 2 inclusive and CSI
- Secure improvements in Foundation Phase and Key

- LA Annual Report to Elected Members
- Standards in Welsh 1st Language
- 2013 Banding data and 2014 National categorisation data [primary and secondary].
- Secure improvements in the outcomes of new literacy and numeracy tests
- Summary of Estyn judgements for primary/secondary schools between 2012>2014. School Performance & Achievement 2011-12
- Reduce the proportion of schools requiring follow-up activity after an inspection
- Outcomes achieved by those at risk of not maintaining their secondary school place through Key Stage 4.

### ***Quality Indicator: 1.2 Wellbeing***

#### **Outcomes:**

- Attitudes to keeping healthy and safe
- Participation and enjoyment in learning
- Community involvement and decision making

Overall, school inspection reports indicate that learners exhibit good standards of behaviour, and that they are involved well in decisions about their life in the authority's schools or maintained settings. The inspection reports also show that learners participate well in learning activities. There are good outcomes in relation to the targets in the local authority and partnership plans.

Attendance is high in both primary and secondary schools. Unverified data for the current school year suggests there is a marked improvement in attendance at both secondary (93.8%) and primary (94.8%) levels.

Permanent exclusion levels are low. The local authority continues to work with schools to reduce the number of school days lost to exclusion. The Managed Moves protocol is fully embedded within the secondary sector and is used as one of the tools to support this. Overall across both primary and secondary sectors, the average number of days lost to fixed term exclusions of 6 days or more show a downward trend, from 13.1 in 2010-2011 to 10.7 in 2012-2013. Unverified data for 2013-2014 suggests a further reduction to 9.3 with the average number of days lost in the secondary sector being 9.6. School policy relating to exclusions has been challenged by the local authority and the previous practice of automatic doubling, i.e. 5 days, 10 days 20 days, for pupils incurring a number of exclusions within the

school year has ceased, supporting the reduction.

The average number of days lost due to exclusion in the primary sector remains low; unverified data for 2013-14 shows this to be 1.8 days for fixed term exclusions of 5 days or less and 8.6 days for 6 days or more. Despite this, the overall numbers of exclusions within the primary sector remains a current focus for the Local Authority. The Authority has needed to address the level of exclusions of a small core of seven learners with a range of significant needs who between them account for 79 of the 216 incidents.

Learners participate well in a comprehensive range of activities which contribute towards improving their wellbeing. Standards of wellbeing are good in nearly all schools inspected in the current cycle. Pupils enjoy happy, safe and purposeful environments. Standards of behaviour are good and children and young people develop their attitudes, beliefs, knowledge and behaviours well.

Learners engage well in provision which supports them to lead healthy lifestyles. They gain awareness of aspects such as substance misuse and receive recognition for learning achieved. Nearly all learners involved with school based counselling service report a positive impact on their lives and make considerable gains in confidence and in personal and emotional awareness. These learners respond well to bespoke interventions and demonstrate improvements in attitudes, behaviour, and educational attainment. Four Flintshire Primary Schools have successfully gained the National Quality Award for Healthy Schools.

Youth Services in Flintshire are now delivered in an integrated way due to enhanced collaboration between providers in all sectors. Youth Justice and Drugs and Alcohol teams have been integrated into the Youth Services portfolio. The youth service has a good reach and young people participate well in youth service activities. The service has an outcomes focussed plan to steer direction and measure impact. Increases in Duke of Edinburgh Award participation and broadened reach with better outcomes are particularly encouraging.

The evidence from data is that there is good take-up of programmes of physical activity and participation rates in specific schemes are particularly high. Participation levels in sports development programmes and extra-curricular sports activities are good. The percentage of learners involved has increased over the last three years; in particular girls have been targeted and their participation has increased. The impact of these activities on healthy lifestyles is analysed well and learners report positive impact on their lives. The opportunities offered by grant funded projects e.g. Families First also enhances and sustains behaviour changes and decreases inequality of opportunity for access to provision.

Learners participate in, and influence the development of, strategic documents. They also develop specific versions to aid accessibility for other children and young people. Learner views shape decisions in some policy areas and school inspection reports indicate that learners are involved well in decisions about their lives in school and in our young people's focused work outside formal education e.g. in the Integrated Youth Provision arena.

The percentage of learners continuing in full time education post 16 is amongst the best in

Wales. The level of young people not in education, training or employment is amongst the lowest in Wales. Rapid positive progress is also being made with wider indicators such as job seekers allowance claimants between the ages of 16 and 24. The Authority's Youth Engagement and Progression Framework has been praised by the Welsh Government. The targeted work by the Families First programme young people focused projects and the Integrated Youth Provision programmes ,e.g. Time for change, offers early identification and early intervention approaches The Dragons Den strategy for engaging employer mentors and young people in entrepreneurial activities is rapidly being rolled out across other Authorities following positive impact in Flintshire.

**Key sources of evidence:**

- Welsh Government statistical bulletins (attendance)

**Key issues & challenges:**

- Continue to raise attendance levels
- Continue to reduce the number and length of fixed term exclusions

***Key Question 2: How good is provision?***

***Quality Indicator: 2.1 Support for school improvement***

**Outcomes:**

- Local Authority support, monitoring, challenge and intervention
- The Authority's work in raising standards in priority areas, including curriculum support
- Support for school leadership, management and governance

The Local Authority provides effective and appropriate monitoring, support, challenge and intervention for all schools, including special schools and pupil referral units, delivered through GwE as a commissioned joint arrangement between North Wales Authorities.

Partnership Agreements clearly set out arrangements to support, monitor, challenge and intervene in schools. Work with specific schools in amber and red categories has been characterised by clear timetables for action and definitive agreed targets and outcomes. As the service which undertakes termly monitoring visits on behalf of the authorities, GwE is well-informed about standards of achievement in schools, and this is supported by the judgements of the institutions themselves in evaluation questionnaires.

Data and contextual information are used forensically to categorise schools and to agree on an appropriate level of intervention and support. Challenge Advisers now know their link schools well which has also resulted in better quality pre-inspection reports for Estyn.

Effective use has been made of a vast range of data on standards and quality of education to monitor and evaluate performance and to challenge schools and individual subject departments but the impact of the work has been more significant in underperforming schools where a high

percentage have made more mature use of data when evaluating and findings trends, when identifying areas for improvement and when prioritising courses of action in relation to standards. A more mature level of approach is also evident in these schools re: target setting procedures e.g. more intelligent use of assessments, FFT data, FSM family performance thresholds and lines of regression etc. However, a more consistent approach must be taken to ensure that schools across the performance range are challenged on their performance and specifically on the achievements of individual pupils/groups of pupils.

Termly visits are conducted to every school to monitor and challenge standards and quality of leadership. Those schools of concern locally or/and in an Estyn follow-up category are visited more frequently. The findings of these visits are used to help authorities determine a risk category for their schools and to target additional support. In each instance, a report is sent to the Headteacher and Chair of Governors, with GwE's work now firmly integrated into local School Performance Monitoring Practice. As a result of this additional support and the intensified scrutiny and accountability, most schools have made good progress and three have been removed from Estyn categories of concern in the last eighteen months. In specific instances, the Challenge Adviser attends meetings of the Governing Body and School Performance Monitoring Group to present their reports. Each monitoring visit has a focus area however standards of achievement and progress towards priorities and targets are a common thread. Self-evaluations and School Development Plans are crucial to driving improvements within institutions and are therefore central to all discussions with schools.

The autumn visit focuses additionally on outcomes; the spring visit on standards of achievement in learners' books; and the summer visit on quality of leadership at all levels. In an attempt to ensure consistency and transparency of visits, a matrix is used to reach a judgement on the quality of the various elements. This ensures that regional themes are operational, that good practices are identified and shared, and that further support is targeted on a risk basis. As a result of the above action [and specific focus on joint observation and scrutiny], the capacity of the Senior Management Teams and Middle Leaders to evaluate quality of teaching and learning in schools, has improved. However, a minority of schools need further support to evaluate standards in specific departments.

There has been a relentless focus on standards in those schools which have been targeted and there is evidence from a number of sources, including Estyn inspection and end of key stage performance that a high percentage of those schools have improved radically since 2012-2013. It is judged that GwE's strategies and procedures for challenging and supporting schools which were significantly underperforming have been very effective and have resulted in firm improvements.

Although there are strengths in the support element of GwE's work with amber/red category school e.g. developing more robust self-evaluation procedures and more effective use of data, which has resulted in improvements across both sectors, it is judged that further work remains to be done to ensure that a more appropriate balance is struck between challenging and supporting so that all schools can easily access quality guidance, across a range of aspects and priorities. Involvement with and impact on 'coasting' good schools has been much less significant and is being addressed as part of the GwE work programme for 2014-2015.

## Developing Leadership:

Flintshire is well represented on the National Leadership Development Board, with practitioners also contributing to leadership development regionally and locally. We firmly believe that improving quality of leadership, at every level, is fundamental to ensuring the sustainability of recent improvements and ensuring that high risk category schools make the necessary progress. As well as prioritising the area as part of termly monitoring visits, we have intensified the work with a number of schools and individuals using a targeted approach. There are several examples of Challenge Advisers working with 'good practice' school head teachers to provide target schools with guidance and support – in the form of individual sessions or group workshops. Good practice has been shared in strategic forums and presented directly to category schools too. A range of training or guidance sessions have been delivered by either the LA or GwE for senior and middle leaders across a range of developmental work. However, it has not been a coherent delivery across the region and it is acknowledged that there is a need to move to adopting a universal approach to ensure consistency in the quality of provision.

Work is in progress to address this and, during the autumn term, an audit and evaluation of current practice was undertaken before formulating a regional offer of GwE services/training. GwE have considered the priorities noted by the NLDB and will, therefore, firstly offer an effective development programme across the region for middle leaders from January/February 2015 onwards focusing on developing the key skills required to be an effective middle leader in the respective sector. The intention is to progress to offer effective senior leader development from September 2015 onwards. GwE currently provides a variety of effective support and guidance for Headteachers, with the existing support for new Headteachers progressing effectively. GwE has also given attention to the development of the Executive Head role, aligning with the key priorities noted by the NLDB. A jointly arranged Executive Head Conference between the NLDB, GwE and ERW will be held in January 2015 in order to showcase and share effective practice across the regions. An initial Phase 1 prospectus/brochure of middle leadership development training offered across the region by GwE will be published in January 2015, with Phase 2 and 3 included when appropriate. This will also focus on senior leadership development training [Deputy Headteacher, Headteacher, Executive Headteacher]. Effective NPQH selection, support and assessment processes are operational with current recognised effective leaders within the education sector in North Wales used for delivery of the programme.

With regard to Headteachers' Performance Management procedures, all Challenge Advisers have been trained to act as a member of the relevant Governing Body panel. Effective use is made of the Autumn Term Monitoring Visit to collate evidence for determining possible objectives and progress is monitored in subsequent meetings.

We regard governors as central to developing and challenging schools and there is a need to further strengthen their role as a 'critical friend'. Specific work has been undertaken with schools causing concern, including advising, coaching and strengthening governing bodies to increase the rigour of challenge and support within the school community. Work has been undertaken collaboratively in North East Wales to upskill Governors and Elected Members with priority given to improving their understanding of data and of the requirements of challenging Headteachers. The Authority has placed appropriate emphasis on supporting governing bodies to analyse performance data more robustly. As a result most governing bodies have a good understanding of how their

school performs in relation to other, similar schools.

#### School to School Collaboration:

In renewing our collaborative school>school model, we are building on embedded local practice, the recent report by Robert Hill Consulting, the National Model for Regional Working and the priorities outlined by the NLDB. We are fully committed to developing what is recognised globally as a self-improving school system and we fully acknowledge that to establish such a system requires all partners and education stakeholders in North Wales to fully undertake an active role.

We recognise that effective leadership has to come from within schools and that schools must take shared responsibility for their own improvement. Thus, our adopted approach to promoting effective collaboration does not enforce a single method or model on schools, but rather, builds on effective local practice which was already operational.

We also accept that there has to be a multi-layered approach, because not all schools are starting from the same solid base of effective partnership working. Not all schools have the capacity and understanding to effectively challenge peer performance. For most of our schools, our input is one of promoting, facilitating, monitoring, evaluating and ensuring that lessons from best practice are actively cascaded and that all partners are placed in a win-win situation. For a minority of our targeted schools, we take a more proactive and, at times, prescriptive approach.

GwE Challenge Advisors monitor and evaluate progress on a termly basis to ensure accountability and effective progress across the region and school>school collaboration is now included as a line of inquiry in all termly monitoring visits. School leaders jointly presented progress with the Flintshire model to a recent meeting of the Authority's Scrutiny Panel.

As part of the wider strategy, and the multi-layered approach, GwE and the Local Authorities, in partnership with Headteachers, have identified best practice relating to leadership and teaching and learning. Schools/departments and individuals, supported by GwE funding, will operate as lead practitioners to support peers. In Flintshire, Mold Alun is leading for Science developments across the region. The established model will ensure that we will have ease of access to a wider support package for schools and that the support is rooted in best regional practice. The model also allows for capacity building at our best performing schools.

#### Literacy and Numeracy:

A regional Literacy and Numeracy Strategy is being developed during the autumn term 2014, in collaboration with key partners including representatives from schools, LA teams, who are still delivering support on specific aspects of this agenda (e.g. Welsh Advisory Teams, Foundation Phase) and the National Support Programme. In December 2014 the strategy will be shared for consultation with stakeholders before being finalised and published in January 2015.

Generally, in the 2014 National Tests GwE's performance was above the Wales average on the SS>85 indicator in all except the Welsh Reading test. Performance was strongest in the Numerical Reasoning test. A common area for development in 3 of the 4 tests is the % of learners achieving the higher score indicator of >115. During the coming year the analysis of the National Tests will be

used to support the targeting of specific schools.

During the academic year 2013/14 support was allocated in response to requests from System Leaders and NSP Partners, and was focussed on individual teachers with regards to planning and delivery of the Literacy and Numeracy Framework. In schools where the support was most effective, the AP's input, as part of a wider team including the Challenge Advisor, led to an improvement in the quality of teaching, as noted by Estyn or GwE reviews.

Training on Numerical Reasoning for Numeracy Co-ordinators, offered to the region's primary schools in November 2014, was over-subscribed. 270 places were available on 9 sessions in venues across the region. A further training event on Extended Writing is being offered in Flintshire only in response to identified commissioning need. All training will be followed-up by practical class-based support in targeted schools.

Schools Challenge Cymru (SCC):

Flintshire Officers contributed to the development of the SCC framework through sharing experience of development and delivery of similar programmes and documentation from the intervention at Holywell High School. The 'Single School Development Plan' for Holywell has been approved by Welsh Government, and funding identified to support the priorities within the plan.

The GwE capacity-building funding includes an allocation of £513,000 to support capacity building within SCC schools on themes of 'Leadership and Management' and 'Teaching and Learning'. Leadership and Management funding is being used to release members of SMT of other identified schools to work with the Schools Challenge Cymru schools - to share expertise in leadership, support improvement strategies, offer specialist support with assessment/tracking/learner outcomes in specific departments and promoting cross sector collaboration. This work will build leadership capacity within SCC schools. Teaching and Learning funding is being used to release experienced and effective teachers to work with SCC schools to share plans, to observe teaching and learning and to mentor staff – the priority being to develop internal capacity building in core subjects.

The impact upon SCC schools will be more immediately evident, but the longer-term legacy of the development of coaching and leadership skills in subject leaders across the region is in line with one of wider objectives.

Promoting and Developing the Welsh Language:

In addition to the local WESP programme and partnership, a regional Welsh-Medium and Capacity Building Sub-Group has been established. The group promotes greater collaboration and sharing of expertise in Welsh-medium education. Their work has focused on joint-scrutiny of national and Local Authority policies, strategic plans and practices to ensure better understanding and collaboration across the region, specifically in relation to the document One Language for All, the WESP and the effective use of the WEG. It has also promoted and supported the Welsh Language Sabbatical Scheme across the region. The Local Authority's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) was approved by Welsh Government and is the driver for improving Welsh outcomes for learners and promotion of the Welsh language and Welsh medium education. The WESP Forwm

meets regularly and demonstrates strong partnership working between the LA and its partner organisations e.g. Mudiad Meithrin, Menter Iaith Sir y Fflint, Urdd Gobaith Cymru, Coleg Cambria and Syfflag.

Developing 14-19 provision:

An effective regional infrastructure has been operational for a number of years and an experienced steering group, under the lead of a regional co-ordinator, oversees all developments related to the phase. As a result, the region has ensured that all maintained secondary schools and FE colleges within North Wales have met their statutory local curriculum requirements at pre and post 16. Aspects of the work have led to national recognition and specifically in relation to collaboration between FE Colleges and schools. The focus of the local 14-19 Network is on Youth Engagement and Progression, in line with national guidelines.

Developing the Foundation Phase:

Foundation Phase Officers meet regularly to standardise practices across the region, and on a termly basis with Challenge Advisers as part of LA/GwE meetings in order to share information. The Challenge Advisers have collaborated with the LA's to effectively deploy the Foundation Phase officers in target schools as required. GwE and Foundation Phase Officers have also conducted end of phase moderation sessions with target schools

School Performance Monitoring Group:

The School Performance Monitoring Group has been successful in securing improvement in targeted schools. Selection of schools to be part of the Monitoring Group is based on:

- LA/GwE agreed outcomes on 'Capacity to Improve'
- Estyn Outcomes
- Data Profile
- Risk Factors e.g. change of leadership

The Methodology has been extended to secondary in 2013-2014 as Holywell High School has been identified as the first secondary school in need of a similarly intense level of support and challenge.

Going forwards, the new national categorisation system will ensure consistency in how schools are evaluated and supported. The Partnership Agreement ensures that schools have a good understanding of this process and of the level of support they can expect in order to bring about improvement. In most cases, the criteria are used appropriately to target strategic intervention.

However, the proportion of schools identified as requiring follow-up monitoring as a result of inspection remains too high in comparison with other authorities. The Authority has recently used appropriate powers to improve schools through the School Performance Monitoring Group and issues warning notices where required.

Challenge Advisers and Officers analyse performance data well and provide good support for schools' self evaluation procedures. Officers produce performance reports on schools that are

detailed, with an appropriate level of challenge. Whole school reviews, jointly undertaken by GwE Challenge Advisers, Local Authority officers and schools' senior management teams, have improved capacity at school level and help to develop the concept of shared leadership. Effective strategies have been established to respond to national priorities that focus on raising standards in priority areas. For example, support for literacy is good with a strong emphasis on improving reading skills. Good progress has been made in supporting schools and other Young people focussed providers to improve standards and quality of provision for 14 to 19-year-olds.

**Key sources of evidence:**

**Key issues & challenges:**

LA>SchoolPartnership Agreement x6

- Reduce the number of schools requiring follow-up activity as a result of inspection
- Ensure that Regional / Hub arrangements deliver value for money
- Impact on performance and outcomes in targeted schools

Examples of :

Hub meetings

- Increase level of challenge and support for 'coasting' good schools so that they become excellent schools

Pre termly monitoring visit briefing documents for Challenge Advisers

- Further strengthen the role of the Governing Body as a 'critical friend' in schools

Termly monitoring visit reports [Visit 1/2/3 for 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 – primary and secondary]

- Further improve the quality of support to improve self-evaluation and improvement planning in schools

Quality assurance monitoring reports by SMT for termly visits

- Further develop work done by Gwynedd and Ynys Mon re: use of Language Charter to promote the development of the Welsh language across the region

Analysis of feedback from stakeholder survey following all termly visits.

Prospectus of GwE Development Programme for Leadership.

School>School Regional Strategy

Action Plan re: deployment of underspend to support S>S Strategy

Regional Literacy and Numeracy Strategy

Report to Lifelong Learning Overview &

***Quality Indicator: 2.2 Support for Additional Learning Needs***

**Outcomes:**

- Work to meet its statutory obligations in respect of children and young people with additional learning needs (ALN)
- Work in raising standards for children and young people with ALN
- Provision for children and young people with ALN, including provision that is commissioned and/or provided by or with other agencies
- Work with parents and carers of children and young people with ALN

There are clear and widely understood protocols and decision-making processes to assess and decide on support for pupils with additional learning needs. Nearly all pupils with additional learning needs have access to an appropriate range of support and make good progress.

Assessments are carried out at an early stage. Timescales for completing the statutory process and issuing statements are good (92.3% without exceptions, 100% with exceptions). Pupils placed by the Authority in independent special schools have their learning and behavioural needs assessed before placement and monitored subsequently.

There is effective and co-ordinated advice and support for parents and carers of children and young people supported through the Parent Partnership, which has a positive impact on outcomes. The Family Information Service provision is a central one stop shop with an excellent website which also supports parents and carers to access appropriate up to date relevant information and support and signposts to a varied menu of provision from all sectors. There is good continuation of services and effective transition support to help children and young people move between different stages of learning.

Support for additional learning needs and inclusion is good. Many of the pupils with statements, and others identified as having additional learning needs, achieve well and are in mainstream schools. Well-developed consultation with schools enables the authority to delegate most of its resources for additional learning needs. It effectively monitors the impact of these resources on pupils' progress.

The authority has been successful in reducing the number of appeals to the SEN Tribunal for Wales and this figure remains consistently low (2 appeals in 2013-2014) It is working to reduce the percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs whilst balancing this with appropriate access to support for pupils.

Schools receive good training to develop their expertise in meeting a range of needs. Appropriate

training is helping staff to understand pupils' additional needs in order to support individual development planning. The local authority is responding proactively to the proposed integration of Person-Centred planning into the national reforms and officers are supporting schools to explore and develop their awareness and skills in this area.

Officers work together and share information well. They make good use of provision mapping to hold schools to account about pupils' achievements.

**Key sources of evidence:**

- SENTW Annual Report 2014 (when published)
- Education Improvement Plan

**Key issues & challenges:**

- Capacity of schools to provide tiered provision for Children & Young People with ALN and to record the progress of pupils with ALN
- Support schools in readiness for ALN Reform.

***Quality Indicator: 2.3 Promoting social inclusion and wellbeing***

**Outcomes:**

- Work to promote social inclusion and wellbeing of all children and young people, including behaviour, preventing exclusion and education otherwise than at school (EOTAS)
- Promoting attendance and keeping children and young people in education, employment and training
- Youth support services and personal support
- Safeguarding arrangements

School attendance rates for the local Authority are at or above national benchmarks and improving. School attendance is a high priority both for the Welsh Government and local authorities in their aim to improve standards. Flintshire schools have in the main demonstrated a trend of improvement with figures for both the primary and secondary sector being above the national average for Wales. Unauthorised absence in secondary schools (0.4%) remains the lowest in Wales, whilst in primary schools (0.5%), this was the fourth lowest value in Wales with the lowest being 0.2% (2012 -2013).

Table 1: Flintshire Schools in comparison with Welsh Averages

|                            | Attendance |         |         |         | Unauthorised Attendance |         |         |         |
|----------------------------|------------|---------|---------|---------|-------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
|                            | 2010/11    | 2011/12 | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2010/11                 | 2011/12 | 2012/13 | 2013/14 |
| <b>FCC Primary Schools</b> | 93.9       | 94.5    | 94.1    | 94.8    | 0.6                     | 0.4     | 0.5     | 0.4     |
| <b>Wales Average</b>       | 93.3       | 93.8    | 93.7    |         | 0.9                     | 0.7     | 0.9     |         |
| <b>Best in Wales</b>       | 94.5       | 94.9    | 94.4    |         | 0.2                     | 0.2     | 0.2     |         |
| <b>FCC Secondary</b>       | 92.4       | 93.0    | 93.3    | 93.8    | 0.5                     | 0.5     | 0.4     | 0.5     |

|                      |      |      |      |      |     |     |     |     |
|----------------------|------|------|------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| <b>Schools</b>       |      |      |      |      |     |     |     |     |
| <b>Wales Average</b> | 91.4 | 92.2 | 92.6 | 93.6 | 1.5 | 1.4 | 1.3 | 1.3 |
| <b>Best in Wales</b> | 92.5 | 93.7 | 93.6 | 94.5 | 0.5 | 0.5 | 0.4 | 0.5 |

A collective target for attendance was set at 94.8% for primary schools and 93.7% for secondary schools for 2013 -2014. Unverified data suggests that these have been met or exceeded. Target setting for attendance has become an integral part of the GwE system leader visits to schools and forms part of the challenge to headteachers and governing bodies.

The Local Authority continues to target improvement in all educational settings. Training has been provided to Governors and targets for improvement have been set. The funding provided by the WG into the North Wales Consortium has been coordinated by Flintshire County Council with the main thrust being the creation of a Regional Attendance Improvement Team (RAIT). The RAIT team have visited schools across the region to audit existing practice and advise regarding improvement. This approach (RAIT) has been evaluated and recognised as an example of good practice by Wales Government.

Permanent exclusions remain rare. Time lost through exclusions and providing excluded pupils swiftly with alternative high quality full-time education remain key development themes. The Managed Moves protocol is used across the primary and secondary sector and has helped to support this.

Work has continued to reduce the number of days lost through exclusions. The average number of days lost due to exclusion in the primary sector remains low; unverified data for 2013-2014 shows this to be 1.8 days for fixed term exclusions of 5 days or less and 8.6 days for 6 days or more. Despite this, the overall numbers of exclusions within the primary sector has increased. These are in the main due to a small core of 7 learners with a range of significant needs who between them account for 79 of the 216 incidents.

Overall across both primary and secondary sectors, the average number of days lost to fixed term exclusions of 6 days or more show a downward trend, from 13.1 in 2010-2011 to 10.7 in 2012-2013. Unverified data for 2013-2014 suggests a further reduction to 9.3 with the average number of days lost in the secondary sector being 9.6. School policy relating to exclusions has been challenged by the local authority and the previous practice of automatic doubling, i.e. 5 days, 10 days 20 days, for pupils incurring a number of exclusions within the school year has ceased, supporting the reduction.

Flintshire has the highest percentage of young people who are EOTAS, including the highest number of pupils registered solely at PPRUs. A decision was taken against dual registration with schools for some of the PRU settings but this is under consideration as is the provision offered within the PPRU.

Clearly targeted support for groups of vulnerable pupils has resulted in significant improvement, for instance in performance, attendance, attitudes, behaviour, confidence, achievement or relationships. However, outcomes for Children and Young people who are Looked After are a concern. Wider points scores for Key Stage 4 learners in Flintshire have been ranked 21st until last year where the ranking improved to 16<sup>th</sup>. Despite the poor ranking, the

outcomes show a continuous upward trend from 61 (2009-2010) to 147 (2012-2013). A cross-Council steering group has been established and an action plan drafted to identify the areas of concern and action is underway to support improvement..

Different services work well together across the local authority to provide seamless and timely services and support for schools, pupils and parents. Youth Support Services and personal support is effective in ensuring children's and young people's wellbeing.

There is good provision of services around, for example, PSE, sports, the arts and healthy eating. Integrated Youth support services and personal support is effective in ensuring children's and young people's wellbeing is supported in a holistic approach and ensures early intervention programmes support the educational offer.

The Authority works well to promote the social inclusion and well-being of children and young people. Attendance and outcomes for the Gypsy /Traveller pupils and those with English as an Additional Language continue to show a positive trend. Arrangements for behaviour support are good. The Authority gives strong support to schools and parents to increase their capacity and expertise to improve behaviour and secure good outcomes for children and young people. The parenting support programmes have notable practice and good evidenced outcomes.

The authority offers a wide range of provision outside of schools for pupils at Key Stage 4. This helps vulnerable learners, such as looked after children, young people at risk of dropping out of education and children from traveller families to achieve good outcomes by the end of their school careers. They gain a range of qualifications, improve their health and progress to further learning and employment. The Authority's provision in this area has now been relocated to Coleg Cambria and forms part of the PPRU. This has been seen as a positive collaboration between the college and the authority and is working to improve transition from school into further education.

The Authority has significantly improved arrangements for helping schools and staff from different agencies work together to help families improve children and young people's capacity to learn. This includes mentoring for parents, help with housing issues, advice regarding benefits, and improving children's health and self-esteem. In general, this is a strong element of the Authority's work. However strategies to improve attendance have not yet had sufficient impact.

The authority works well with a variety of partners to deliver a wide range of good quality services to help young people improve their opportunities, enable aspirations, achievement and wellbeing. These services include targeted interventions with young parents, young carers, school counselling, and projects to improve health, anti-bullying and tackle racism. They also include work which raises young people's achievement such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award which is sector leading in respect of reach, participation and results and outcomes.

The Authority's arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements and give no current cause for concern, with appropriate policies, procedures and training for safeguarding being in place. It has implemented arrangements for auditing safeguarding practices in all schools. Where the reviews identify shortcomings the authority deploys a team of staff to the school to secure

improvements quickly. In one case the school was issued with a Warning Notice.

**Key sources of evidence:**

Improvement Plan

**Key issues & challenges:**

- Improved outcomes for LAC
- Reduction of EOTAS
- Review of PPRU provision.
- Continue with the roll out of safeguarding health checks.

***Quality Indicator: 2.4 Access and School Places***

**Outcomes:**

- The provision of an appropriate range and number of school places
- Admission to schools
- Co-ordination of early years and play to ensure sufficiency
- Co-ordination of youth support services to ensure access to entitlements

Since 2010 and the formation of the Schools Modernisation Strategy the Authority have undertaken the following work streams:

- New Primary School in Connahs Quay (Cae'r Nant) – September 2012
- Closure of Ysgol Rhes y Cae School - Sept 2013
- Closure of the Croft Nursery and transfer of provision to the neighbouring Queensferry and St. Ethelwold's Primary Schools – July 2014
- New Welsh medium satellite provision in Shotton (Ysgol Croes Atti- Glannau Dyfdrwy) - September 2014
- Construction of new Shotton Primary School (Ysgol Ty Ffynnon ) - September 2014
- The Local Authority has completed its statutory proposal programme of infant and junior amalgamation. Amalgamations reduced the number of schools from 14 infant/junior schools to 7 primary schools.
- Post 16 transformation proposals approved in relation to Buckley, Holywell, Connah's Quay and Shotton/Queensferry. A statutory proposal in relation to Saltney is scheduled to be issued in November 2014.

The Authority has also reached implementation phase of its 21st Century Schools and Post 16 Transformation programmes. The Outline Business Case for both of the latter programmes has received ministerial support. (2014-2017 Band A Programme Circa £64m). The £200m+ North Wales Capital Procurement Framework jointly led by Flintshire and Denbighshire is now in place. This is recognised as sector leading by Welsh Government, with

a range of innovations in social commitments and efficiency.

Good progress has been made with the detailed plans for the £31m investment in the Holywell Community Campus, with submission for planning approval in January 2014. Good progress has been made with the detailed plan for the £14.7m post-16 Hub in Connah's Quay, with submission of detailed plans for approval in January 2014. The Ministerial decision on closure of the sixth form at the Elfed High School in Buckley lends further support to the programme to transform post sixteen provision for learners in the County.

Currently, Flintshire's level of surplus places (15.2% primary, 16.7% secondary and 15.9% overall) is better than the Welsh average, but not yet meeting Ministerial targets. There is a key need to continue our programme to reduce unfilled places in schools to ensure that resources are used to maintain and improve learners' educational experience and outcomes by maintaining low pupil teacher ratios and an appropriate learning environment. This work will be undertaken through the linked capital programme and revised modernisation strategy.

The modernisation of the school estate has been a key corporate priority for the authority for many years and remains so. We will develop its strategies to ensure that we are maximising the potential investment opportunities that may be available via Welsh Government funding.

The Authority has an up to date Asset Management system and data from the system is used to influence decision making on Capital investment in schools. Priorities for investment for the schools capital programme are clear, linked to strategy, funded and agreed and based upon up-to-date information and to data contained within the Authority's Asset Management system.

An accessibility strategy has been in place since 2004, all schools have accessibility plans, physical barriers in all schools have been identified the Authority has undertaken a rolling programme of ensuring a network of schools in all areas of the County are made fully accessible. This programme of improvement continues and is linked to the capital programme & the modernisation strategy.

The Authority has made significant investment in its school buildings since 2001, removing surplus places and reducing the number of schools. The authority has developed a system to analyse the benefits arising from its investment in terms of improving the condition, suitability and efficiency of its schools, and is contributing to a Welsh Government task group in this area.

Despite this significant investment, the Authority's data shows that the school portfolio still requires significant further investment

### **Schools - Condition Category (Sept 2014)**

| Category | Percentage % |
|----------|--------------|
| A        | 28           |
| B        | 60           |
| C        | 9            |
| D        | 3            |

**Schools -Suitability Category (Sept 2014)**

| Category | Percentage % |
|----------|--------------|
| A        | 36           |
| B        | 49           |
| C        | 11           |
| D        | 4            |

Admission arrangements are determined in accordance with the School Admissions Code and are made clear to schools, parents. Children moving in to the area are accommodated in relevant schools without delay. A high percentage of parental preferences continue to be met in the main admissions round. However, due to oversubscription at some schools in both the primary and secondary sector the number of appeals has increased in recent years. All appeals are heard in accordance with the requirements of the School Appeals Code within 30 school days.

There is a good range of early years, play and youth support services provision which meets the needs and children, young people and their families. The authority regularly audits this provision and provides appropriate support to secure ongoing improvements in quality.

There is an appropriate range of early years Foundation Phase learning and play provision which meets the needs of children and their families. The authority works effectively in partnership with the voluntary sector to plan and deliver provision, using surplus capacity in primary schools where it is appropriate to do so. Two new Welsh medium early years' providers have been approved from January 2015 to meet the demand identified through sufficiency surveys. The authority monitors the standards within maintained and non-maintained settings well and provides well-targeted support to improve the quality of the learning provided.

The authority co-ordinates youth support services effectively, based on a thorough analysis of need. As a result, young people can access a range of appropriate support services.

**Key sources of evidence:**

- Draft School Modernisation Policy
- 

**Key issues & challenges:**

- Capacity to address the renewed programme for school modernisation.

***Question 3: How good are leadership & management?******Quality Indicator: 3.1 Leadership*****Outcomes:**

- The impact of leadership
- Strategic direction and meeting national and local priorities
- Elected members and other supervisory boards

Officers and elected members share a common vision, values and purpose focused through the Authority's streamlined improvement planning arrangements. This is embodied through the Local Authority's streamlined Improvement Plan. Leaders communicate high expectations for securing improvement and challenge schools positively to good effect, for example, through the School Standards Monitoring Group.

Policies and initiatives are implemented consistently. Officers and elected members use relevant management information about performance to address issues of underperformance and to set objectives and targets that are strategic priorities. Progress against the Authority's priorities is monitored corporately and the outcomes for schools are generally improving.

Cabinet members now show determination in challenging and supporting services and taking difficult decisions to bring about necessary improvements, for example, on the school modernisation programme.

The local authority and its partners have a clear commitment to learners and developing a learning culture in the county. Senior leaders have very high aspirations for children and young people and they understand clearly the impact of wider regeneration and social care on educational outcomes. Service structures and resource planning effectively support the delivery of the shared priorities embedded in the Single Integrated Plan for Flintshire and services recognise and understand how they contribute to the outcomes.

Senior management restructuring has enhanced the team's agility and ability to respond rapidly to changing circumstances. Senior leaders work in a sophisticated way with a range of strategic partners across public services to set high level priorities together and deliver their vision for the people of Flintshire. Senior leaders have put structures in place to guide

cooperation and lead by example. The extensive use of secondments, joint appointments and collaborative initiatives means that staff at all levels recognise and understand each other's strengths whilst working confidently within their own specialisms.

The Authority has a track record of identifying and intervening where hurdles to effective working hinder progress. Difficult decisions are responded to proactively. Where appropriate the Leadership, other elected members, the Chief Executive or other senior managers intervene effectively to overcome obstacles. Systems leadership and the delegation of resources support the efforts to place the learner first. Leadership is shared and operational staff can take decisions promptly to support learners and their families so that they stay engaged in learning.

Scrutiny task and finish groups (including the School Performance Monitoring Group) have successfully examined key aspects of the authority's work, and have informed decision making well. Elected members have developed their understanding and expertise through working in small groups to analyse specific aspects of education. In addition, the ongoing programme of scrutiny committee is raising the level and quality of challenge to schools.

**Key sources of evidence:**

**Key issues & challenges:**

- Local Safeguarding Board Single Integrated Plan
- Embedding revised organisational structures
- Review of Education Services in Wales – implications for school improvement and local authorities
- Attracting good leaders to senior roles in schools
- Revised Operating Structure
- Wales Audit Office Annual Report (June 2014)
- Annual Report of the School Performance Monitoring Group

***Quality Indicator: 3.2 Improving quality***

**Outcomes:**

- Self-evaluation, including listening to learners and others
- Planning improvement
- Involvement in professional learning communities

Leaders, managers and elected members have an accurate picture and understanding of the authority's strengths and weaknesses. They routinely make good use of a range of rigorous

monitoring activities.

The Authority undertakes a wide range of self-evaluation activities that cover most aspects of the work of the service. It analyses data and first-hand evidence well to make accurate evaluations of the quality and impact of services. The arrangements also identify clearly the areas for improvement and help ensure that progress against strategic and other plans is reviewed effectively.

The Authority engages well with partners, service users and other stakeholders in its evaluation processes and in planning for improvement. For example, the Integrated Youth Strategy “Delivering Together 2014 – 2018” featured full engagement of young people’s representatives in its development.

Performance data is consistently used to monitor progress and plan for improvement. There is a sustained focus on achieving progress against the Authority’s priorities. The Authority regularly seeks the views of students, schools and the Authority’s partners.

The Authority has effective performance management arrangements which bring about improvements. They also help ensure that objectives for individual officers link well to operational and strategic priorities. Key plans align well at all levels and help elected members to understand and make effective use of performance information. The well-defined performance management cycle allows them to monitor the progress of improvement plans and take timely remedial action.

The area benefits from well-established professional learning communities within and across schools from across the Authority to enable schools to develop and share their professional knowledge. There are effective networks of professional practice with other authorities and their partners. A priority for GwE is the enhancement of subject support networks in 2014-2015.

Collaborative working across local authorities is seen as a priority and this is developing at a good pace. Senior officers have contributed significantly to the development of a regional and national school improvement developments and regional collaborations for supporting programmes.

The Authority has addressed well all of the recommendations from previous Estyn inspections.

**Key sources of evidence:**

- LSB Single Integrated Plan for Flintshire

**Key issues & challenges:**

Continuing to build a school-led resilient school improvement system,

- Flintshire County Council Improvement Plan through enhanced collaborative working
- School Improvement Plan
- Draft Integrated Youth Strategy
- Q2 Performance Report

### ***Quality Indicator: 3.3 Partnership working***

#### **Outcomes:**

- Strategic partnerships
- Joint planning, resourcing and quality assurance

Partnership activities make a strong contribution to widening the range of choices for learners and this has benefits for their standards and wellbeing. The Authority takes a leading role in developing joint working practices and promotes trust and good communication between partners.

The Authority's officers focus well on joint planning and resourcing as well as building capacity for continuous improvement. The Authority has strong links with the community, good liaison and communication with schools, parents/carers and works effectively with other agencies enabling officers to deliver joined-up programmes that improve outcomes and wellbeing for learners. The Family Information Service is an important conduit to enable access to relevant up to date information to all to support these aims.

Senior managers demonstrate significant commitment to developing strategic partnerships across all aspects of the practice of the Authority. Through the work of Local Service Board (LSB), the Authority and its partners have joint ownership of priorities and outcomes. These aims are communicated clearly in the LSB's Single Integrated Plan.

The Authority makes very good use of its partnerships to deliver services which improve outcomes and wellbeing for children and young people. These include effective partnerships between the Authority, the police, local health board, voluntary agencies, other local education authorities and integrated youth support services. The Authority monitors and co-ordinates the work of these partners well. Individual partners have a good understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses in the services they deliver and collective contributions and co-production can be evidenced.

Partnership working between the Authority, further and higher education establishments, employers and secondary schools in developing the work of the 14-19 network is recognised as good. They successfully promote co-operation and remove unhelpful competition between providers. They also enable school governors, the college, employers and the Authority to plan, monitor and resource an effective 14-19 curriculum that meets the needs

of learners well. Collaboration in development and transition to the new post 16 hub at Connahs Quay has been recognised by the Welsh Government through publication of a national case study.

Partnership working between education, children's services and health are very good. Highly effective, integrated planning across partners supports the smooth transition of pupils with complex needs into education, across key stages and from school to adult services.

Partnership working between schools and the Authority is good. There is a high level of trust and a common understanding of the need to work together to raise standards and to improve services for all children and young people.

The Authority has valuable information about the range of interventions supporting children, young people and their families and utilises several data sets and evaluation reports to feed in to the overarching Single Integrated Plan. This includes useful outcome data on the progress of children and young people, and on the outcomes of collaborative delivery approaches.

Many externally funded initiatives track the progress of learners and service users and their families effectively, e.g. Families First, Flying Start and Youth Support Grant. In the best examples, early bespoke interventions with families make measurable contributions to improved educational outcomes for learners e.g. the Team Around the Family Impact assessment report. There is also a new Integrated Youth Provision Plan which has a results based accountability evaluation methodology approach.

However, the partnership does not yet fully capture the overall performance of partner interventions or track consistently the progress of children and young people. This means that opportunities are missed to make the best use of resources and interventions across sector and service boundaries. In particular, the early intervention work by wider support services with learners and their families is not yet fully known and built upon by schools or school improvement services. The Family Information Service support should be used to address this area of concern in future.

**Key sources of evidence:**

- Single Integrated Plan
- Improvement Plan
- School Improvement Plan
- Draft Integrated Youth Strategy

**Key issues & challenges:**

- Making the most of partners' information on vulnerable families in planning for progression
- Maintaining partnership priorities in a time of diminishing resources

***Quality Indicator: 3.4 Resource management***

**Outcomes:**

- Management of resources
- Value for money

Education reform and investment has remained a priority for the Local Authority despite the challenging financial climate. The high strategic priority given to the education service is reflected in the Authority's allocation of both revenue and capital resources. The schools' delegated budgets have been protected from efficiency reductions in recent years.

Business partner arrangements in human resources and finance have been strengthened in recent years. The method of distributing funding has been completely renewed following fundamental review with schools. Meanwhile, human resources policies have also been reviewed through collaborative working at local, regional and national level.

The Authority's spending decisions relate adequately to strategic priorities for improvement and benefits for schools and their learners. Recent work on medium term financial planning and the fundamental review of the school funding formula give further positive prospects as does completion of school workforce remodelling as part of the single status agreement.

Staffing, accommodation and financial resources are soundly managed and deployed to support learning and improvement. The Authority reviews the outcomes of its financial plans to make sure that money is spent wisely and has a positive impact on standards.

Partnership activity provides good value for money because it contributes to extensive opportunities and improved outcomes for learners in aspects which the Authority and its schools alone could not provide.

The Authority has been successful in securing grant funding for both revenue and capital projects but is also committed to contributing half of the current £64m school modernisation investment in schools from its own resources.

School balances reduced significantly during 2013-2014, in line with the proactive strategy of the Authority in providing schools with appropriate support and challenge in those schools where surpluses are too high and where there are deficits.

The Authority has a good record of effectively managing its education budget and improving efficiency. Joint working with a range of partners has been effective in increasing the Authority's capacity to support learners.

Overall, the Authority's education service provides good value for money (WAO 2014).

**Key sources of evidence:**

- Medium Term Financial Plan
- School Funding Formula

**Key issues & challenges:**

- Renewing school support service arrangements and managing budget reductions for central services, whilst continuing to meet "protection" expectations for

- School balances report delegated school budgets.

#### Appendix 1: WAO Performance Letter- June 2014

### **Flintshire schools provide good value for money, but there is scope for greater efficiency within the education system.**

The Council evaluated its 2012-2013 progress against each of the four sub-priorities as satisfactory, with some delays to scheduled activity, but broadly on track. The Council remained confident of achieving the outcomes for three of the four sub-priorities, but was uncertain about its ability to deliver organisational change under the School Modernisation Strategy and the national 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools programme.

Results in Flintshire primary schools improved significantly in 2013. In contrast to 2012, the proportion of seven-year olds and 11 year-olds achieving the expected standards both exceeded the Wales average. A comparison of performance in Flintshire primary schools with that in schools situated in areas with similar levels of deprivation suggests that Flintshire schools performed broadly at the levels that might be expected.

In secondary schools, 62.2 per cent of 16 year-olds gained five or more good GCSE grades that included the important subjects of mathematics and English or Welsh (first language). This result was the highest of all councils in Wales and almost 10 percentage points above the average for Wales. The number of 16 year-old school leavers in Flintshire who are not in employment, education or training has continued to reduce; in 2012, the proportion fell to 2.3 per cent, second lowest of all councils in Wales.

The Council is responsible for ensuring an adequate supply of school places in an efficient manner. In January 2013, there were some 4,000 surplus places in Flintshire schools (15.4 per cent of the total) distributed across the 83 primary and secondary schools. Though higher than Welsh Government target of 10 per cent, this is a little better than the Wales average of 17.4 per cent. The Council continues to address the modernisation of its schools estate.

Despite the surplus capacity, the schools system in Flintshire costs less to run than in most councils in Wales. For 2013-2014, the Council set an education budget (excluding specific grants) that amounted to £4,803 per pupil compared with an average across Wales of £4,992. Given the broadly positive outcomes outlined above, the low costs suggest that the schools service is providing good value for money.

Within this low total, however, the Council spends more per pupil than any other council in Wales, on placing pupils with additional learning needs in schools outside Flintshire. For 2013-2014, the Council set a budget of almost £3.5 million for this item, representing £152

for each pupil in the County compared with an average across Wales of just £35 per pupil. It is very likely that there will always be a few young people living in Flintshire whose educational needs are so complex that they cannot be met by schools within the County. However, Flintshire's expenditure on school places outside the county has been very high for several years and further reduces what is already a low level of expenditure on pupils in Flintshire schools. (NB In LA view this is due to location of Clwyd based provision, particularly YPB which we would not seek to replicate locally).