



**SELF EVALUATION
DOCUMENT
DECEMBER 2016**

Current performance:

Overall, the present quality of Education Services is adequate and the capacity to improve outcomes is also adequate

- Outcomes at all Key Stages have improved in recent years. There have been particularly positive improvements in primary school categorisation (under the national model) and in learner outcomes at Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3.
- The percentage of learners leaving school without a qualification and the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) are low. At 1.3% in 2015 the proportion of Year 11 NEETS was lowest in Wales and lowest ever Flintshire figure for the second consecutive year.
- School inspection outcomes throughout the current six year inspection cycle are in line with the ranking expectations for Flintshire.
- Public confidence in local education is high. People in Flintshire gave the second highest rating for the state of education in the 2015 National Survey for Wales (7.1 Flintshire, 7.2 Conwy).
- Support for additional learning needs and social inclusion is good. Safeguarding arrangements are robust and monitored carefully.
- Levels of unauthorised attendance in both primary and secondary schools remain significantly below the national average and with the secondary schools achieving the lowest national level of 0.4%.
- Service and team plans link well to Directorate and Corporate priorities. Senior leaders understand clearly the impact of wellbeing, safeguarding and regeneration on educational outcomes.
- The Local Authority has made good progress in developing its School Modernisation programme.

However:

- The proportion of schools requiring follow-up activity after an inspection is still too high. There is a need for the benchmark performance of schools to continue to improve at the end of Foundation Phase and at the end of Key Stage 4.
- The Local Authority needs to maintain the work to promote further improvement in primary and secondary school attendance by supporting a reduction in the levels of authorised absence.
- The Local Authority needs to continue to improve in all phases of education, including improving the percentage of pupils achieving higher levels in subjects and CSI at the end of each Key Stage.
- In contrast to earlier self-evaluations there are key signs that we need to focus increased effort in renewing school improvement approaches to secure improved learner outcomes at Key Stage 4, including raising the level 2 inclusive in six schools by raising maths and /or English outcomes.
- This also requires a focus on securing consistency of self-evaluation, improvement planning, governance and leadership across secondary schools.
- We need to continue work to reduce the gap between FSM and non-FSM pupils by improving outcomes for FSM pupils.
- 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, improving efficiency and utilising additional external grants to enhance our offer.
- Political and officer accountability and scrutiny of performance within the Education & Youth Portfolio is robust. Scrutiny has examined difficult aspects of the Authority's work 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.

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.
- The regional school improvement model remains in an early stage of development and needs to continue to develop its approach to meeting local needs.

Recommendations:

1. Improve benchmark performance of schools at the end of Foundation Phase and Key Stage 4.
2. Continue to improve the performance of disadvantaged pupils (in receipt of free school meals) and other underperforming groups (e.g. boys and pupils with additional learning needs).
3. Continue to improve school attendance where performance is low and below the median.
4. Continue work to maintain NEETs at 16+ at a low level.
5. Further develop the secondary school improvement strategy, including the school-to-school support programme.
6. Progress the restructure of Education Other Than at School (EOTAS) and wider inclusion service provision.

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

End of Phase Data Analysis:

Whilst performance against headline attainment indicators over the last three years has, overall, been below our expected ranking levels at Foundation and Key Stage 2 based on FSM benchmarking, some key indicators continue to improve, particularly at Key Stage 2.

Outcomes across all main indicators in Foundation Phase in 2016 were either static or saw a slight dip in 2016 e.g. 86.9% Outcome 5 in Foundation Phase Outcome Indicator (FPOI) compared to 87.0% in 2015 (-0.1%). This very small drop impacted on Flintshire's benchmarked position for the FPOI, dropping from 9th to 13th. While Mathematical Development in 2015 and 2016 remained at 90.2%, LCE and PSD experienced dips of 0.6% and 0.9% respectively. LCW dropped by 3.1% and is a targeted area for improvement in the five Welsh medium schools within the authority. Since 2014 the FPOI in Flintshire has increased by 2.4%, so the trend is generally positive, but the priority going forward is that this dip is reversed in 2017 and outcomes in all assessed areas continue to improve.

In 2015-16 the performance of boys in the FPI continued to improve but that of girls dipped by 0.6%. Over the last five years, girls have continued to outperform boys in all assessed areas of learning at Outcome 5 but the gap has closed over the last five years by 2.2%. Data shows that performance at the higher level (FPO6) improved in LCE and MDT compared to 2015 but dropped in LCW and PSD. While the gap between e-FSM and n-FSM closed slightly in 2016, it remains too wide at -18.5%. Improving performance in Foundation Phase, particularly for FSM pupils and boys remains a key priority of the LA's Improvement Plan.

At Key Stage 2, the Core Subject Indicator (CSI) performance in 2016 improved strongly on the previous year by 2.2% to 90.1%. This places Flintshire 5th in Wales, above its expected benchmark position of 6th. The CSI has increased by 4% overall from 2014. The improvement trend continues across virtually all subjects in KS2 except for W1L which dipped from 86.4% in 2015 to 84.3% in 2016 so is an area of focus for the Local Authority. Progress in the CSI was made by both boys and girls and the gap between boys and girls has narrowed to -4.4%, the lowest for three years. At KS2, performance at the higher level 5 also improved across nearly all subject areas with a dip of 1.4% in Welsh First Language compared to 2015. The gap between e-FSM and n-FSM learners reduced significantly between 2015 and 2016 from 18.6% to 9.4% and is now at its lowest level for 5 years.

The regional target setting tool is now established in schools and is being used effectively by school leaders and Challenge Advisers with the aim of securing

sustained improvement and ensuring appropriate interventions for learners in need of support to achieve expected outcomes. The national categorisation profile has improved in Flintshire over the last twelve months with seven more primary schools moving into Standards Group 1. The number of schools in Standards Group 3 also reduced by seven schools. The profile of support categories for primary schools has also improved with no schools in the 'Red' category for two years, a reduction in the number of schools in 'Amber' from 11 to 8 and an increase in 'Green' schools from 11 to 19.

At Key Stage 3 outcomes continued the trend of improvement in 2016 with county aggregate outcomes higher than in 2015 in nearly all core and non-core subjects. The CSI places Flintshire at its expected benchmark position of 6th. Welsh 1st Language has significantly improved (16.8%) and the upward trend remains in Maths, Science and Welsh 2nd Language. There were very slight dips in English, MFL, Music and D&T. The CSI has been on a strong upward trend for 5 years, with improvements for both boys and girls and the gender gap reducing to 5.7%, the narrowest for 4 years. At the higher levels, Flintshire's profile at Level 6 across all core subject areas improved and are above GwE and Wales averages, with the best improvement in Welsh 1st Language which increased by 26.8%. Performance of e-FSM pupils has improved over the last three years at CSI to 76.2% and is currently second best in the region, with the gap narrowing year on year.

At Key Stage 4 in 2016, outcomes at Level 2+ (including EOTAS) improved on the position in 2015 to 61.5% from 60.6% but this was short of the initial target of 68.1% and the final set of projections of 66.3%. This was the second best performance in the region in this indicator and places Flintshire 10th against its expected ranked position of 6th. The Capped Points in Flintshire in 2016 was 343.3, a slight improvement compared to the 2015 outcome of 342.1. The Level 1 threshold increased by 0.8% to 95.3% but the Level 2 threshold decreased slightly from 83.2% to 82.6%. Performance at the higher grades at GCSE (A*-A) increased by 0.4% to 14.5% but the percentage of e-FSM learners achieving the top grades remained static at 3% and is too low. All of these indicators are below modelled expectations so improving performance across all KS4 indicators for all pupils and particularly e-FSM pupils remains a key priority.

Out of the 12 mainstream secondary schools, 5 schools were within 1% of their final predictions but 7 schools were below, with some considerably below. Therefore, another focus of the authority's improvement plan and regional business plan is to ensure target setting, monitoring and intervention processes within schools achieve a closer match between targets/projections and final learner outcomes.

The model in Flintshire for Key Stage 5 varies across a range of provision including schools, local consortia arrangements and Coleg Cambria, making the analysis of performance more difficult. In 2016 Flintshire's performance at the Level 3 threshold of achieving 2 A Levels increased by 1.0% to 98.1%. However provisional data in pupil outcomes at particular grade levels experienced a drop e.g. A*-E grades dropped by 0.4%, A*-C dropped by 4.3% and at A*-A there was a drop of 4.4% from 2015. The focus of the LA/GwE improvement plan is to increase the percentage of higher grades at A level (C and above) and particularly at A*-A.

National Literacy & Numeracy Data Analysis:

The Flintshire average age standardised score in the English Reading Test is 100.2. The percentage of learners' standardised reading scores less than 85 increased by 0.4% in 2016 to 12.6%. However, this is below the Welsh average of 13.3%. Scores between 85 and 115 increased marginally by 0.2% to 69.1% which is above the Welsh average of 67.1%. The percentage of scores above 115 decreased by 0.8% to 15.6% and is below the Welsh average of 16.7%.

The Flintshire average age standardised score in the Welsh Reading Test is 99.5. The percentage of learners' standardised reading scores less than 85 increased by 1.7% in 2016 to 14.8%. However, this is below the Welsh average of 13.7%. Scores between 85-115 decreased by 3.9% to 68.5% which is just above the Welsh average of 68.3%. The percentage of scores above 115 increased by 0.6% to 14.4% and is below the Welsh average of 16.6%.

The Flintshire average age standardised score in the Procedural Numeracy Test is 99.5. The percentage of learners' standardised procedural scores less than 85 increased by 0.6% in 2016 to 13.2%. However this is slightly above the Welsh average of 13.1%. Scores between 85-115 increased marginally by 0.2% to 69.3% which is above the Welsh average of 67.9%. The percentage of scores above 115 decreased by 1.0% to 14.3% and is below the Welsh average of 16.1%.

The Flintshire average age standardised score in the Reasoning Numeracy Test is 101. The percentage of learners' standardised reasoning scores less than 85 increased by 1.5% in 2016 to 11.8%. However this is below the Welsh average of 12.5%. Scores between 85-115 decreased by 1.1% to 68.3% which is above the Welsh average of 67.5%. The percentage of scores above 115 decreased by 0.4% to 16.5% and is below the Welsh average of 16.8%.

Vulnerable Learners:

In 2015 the average points score for Looked After Children (LAC) was 248 which was close to the Welsh average of 269. The performance of learners from traveller families from Foundation Phase through to KS3 has generally shown a general positive trend of Improvement however, outcomes for 2016 appear to show a dip in performance as demonstrated by the table below. This is related to the small cohort of learners and the number of those with SEN. Continued engagement with the Traveller community has resulted in a positive engagement with education, with increasing numbers of pupils completing their education at Key Stages 3 and 4.

Percentage Achieving FPOI/CSI					
Key Stage	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
FP	26%	50%	57%	60%	47%
KS2	33%	61%	50%	77%	45%
KS3	20%	50%	50%	66%	40%

Numbers of pupils with English as an Additional Language continue to increase. Outcomes for this cohort of pupils continues to have a positive upward trend as demonstrated below.

Outcomes for EAL pupils (NEWBES removed)				
	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016
FP Indicator/ CSI	62%	77%	80%	81%
KS2 CSI	71%	79%	78%	78%
KS3 CSI	70%	73%	77%	83%
Level 1 threshold	93%	87%	100%	100%
Level 2 threshold	73%	83%	90%	91%
Key Stage 4 CSI	40%	35%	57%	45%

Progression:

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 on an overall downward trend between 2009 and 2015, with the lowest national level of 1.3% being maintained for 2 consecutive years. Work to minimise the level of young people not in education, employment and training is a high priority for the Public Service Board's Youth Engagement and Progression Framework. The 14-19 Network has a particular focus on reducing Year 11 NEETS and the partnership working with all providers and Careers Wales reduced the figure to just 1.3% in 2014 and 2015. Significant improvement has also been secured in reducing the number of year 11 pupils who access their education through the Portfolio of Pupil referral Units which has contributed to the low NEET figure.

Inspection Outcomes:

Inspection outcomes in primary and secondary phases in Flintshire during the 2015-16 cycle have presented a mixed picture and remain an area of focus for the Local Authority, supported by its regional partner, GwE. Out of the 9 primary schools inspected, 3 were judged as 'Good' in both key judgements with no follow up and one asked to provide a case study for excellent practice in a particular area of its provision. Another 3 schools received 'Good' judgements overall with minor issues requiring Local Authority Monitoring but a further three schools were inspected and judged to require Estyn Monitoring, which has brought the overall percentage of inspections with outcomes of 'Good or better' down to 66.6% which is lower than the figure for the 2014-15 cycle. All primary schools in follow up activity from the 2014-15 cycle were successfully removed during the year.

Inspection outcomes in secondary schools during the 2015-16 cycle have been disappointing with only 40% of those inspected graded as 'Good or better' in the key judgements. Of the 5 schools inspected, 2 were graded as 'Good' (with Local Authority monitoring), 1 was placed in Estyn Monitoring and 2 were placed in Special Measures.

This is a significant shift in the Local Authority’s inspection profile from previous years. Schools causing concern are the subject of close monitoring by the LA and GwE and there are clear action plans in place and highly focused support to ensure the removal of these schools from follow up in the shortest possible timescales. Where appropriate, leadership and governance arrangements have been strengthened in these schools and Accelerated Improvement Boards established comprising senior school leaders, key governors and senior officers of the Local Authority and GwE. Although the authority has a good track record in supporting schools being removed from categories, the overall priority is to reduce the number of schools being placed in follow up in the first instance and have more schools achieve judgements of ‘Good’ or ‘Excellent’. Increasing use of intervention powers are being made where schools cause concern to ensure challenge and support is timely and effective.

Inspection outcomes in the non-maintained sector where settings are funded to provide Early Years Foundation Phase were mostly positive in 2015-16. Out of the 9 settings inspected, one was judged to be ‘Excellent’ in Current Performance and Prospects for Improvement, 5 were ‘Good’ with only 1 of them requiring Local Authority Monitoring and 2 were judged to require Estyn Monitoring. One Welsh medium setting was moved from EM to Focused Improvement following a revisit – the setting had faced a number of staffing challenges over the year but is now making steady progress through the high levels of support from the Local Authority and Mudiad Meithrin.

<p>Key sources of evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welsh Government statistical bulletins • All Wales Core Data Sets • Estyn Reports 	<p>Key issues & challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to improve outcomes across key indicators in particularly Foundation Phase and Key Stage 4 • Continue to improve outcomes for e-FSM learners across all phases • Continue to improve outcomes at the higher than expected levels across all phases, particularly A*-A at GCSE and A*-A and A*-C at A level • Flintshire’s performance to match or exceed its expected FSM benchmark of 6th or better in more indicators • Reduce the number of schools being placed in Estyn follow up, particularly serious categories of concern
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Outcomes:

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

The Local Authority uses data well to work with schools and partners to identify those children and young people who are most at risk in relation to their wellbeing and learning outcomes. Families First funding is utilised to embed integrated approaches, systems and services targeted at supporting vulnerable children and young people.

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 in secondary schools is consistently above the Welsh average. WG verified data for the school year 2015/16 confirms a continuous upward trend in attendance at secondary level (93.3 % in 2012/13 to 94.3% in 2015/16), with unauthorised absence continuing to be at the lowest national level of 0.4%, significantly below the Welsh average of 1.3%.

Attendance within the primary sector has remained static at 94.7% for 2015/16. This remains below the Welsh average of 94.9% however, unauthorised absence (0.3%) remains significantly below the Welsh average of 1.1%.

Permanent exclusion levels are low. The local authority continues to work with schools to reduce the number of school days lost to exclusion. National statistics show an upward trend in the rate of exclusions (per 1000 pupils) of 5 days or fewer, 29.4 in 2012/13 to 30.0 in 2014/15 however the rate of increase is significantly lower when compared to the region. The rate of exclusion of 5 days or more was highlighted as a concern in the last Local Authority Estyn inspection, following which rates has shown a continuous downward trend, 2.9 in 2012/13 to 1.7 in 2014/15. The Managed Moves protocol is fully embedded and is used as one of the tools to support this.

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 interventions and demonstrate improvements in attitudes, behaviour, and educational attainment.

Four Flintshire Primary Schools have successfully gained the National Quality Award for Healthy Schools

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 Integrated Youth Provision.

The percentage of learners continuing in education or employment post 16 is the best in Wales. The level of young people not in education, training or employment is 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 Families First programme young people focused projects have been reviewed and a process of re-commissioning has been undertaken to ensure funding is targeted at the identified areas of need. This has resulted in some funding being directed towards a younger age range to identify those at risk of becoming NEET earlier and set up prevention strategies. Integrated Youth Provision has developed an innovative new project (Resilience project) in partnership with the third sector. Resilience complements the TRAC project and offers further additionally to support the TRAC delivery. 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:	Key issues & challenges:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welsh Government statistical bulletins (attendance) • Attendance Action Plan • Integrated Youth Provision Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to improve school attendance and increase the number of schools in quartiles 1 and 2. • Improve the attendance of pupils in receipt of FSM in both primary and secondary sectors. • Improve reintegration rates from PRUs, with a particular focus on key stage 3. • 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 joint education service between North Wales Authorities. Flintshire's Chief Education Officer is now the regional lead director for the service, whilst the Cabinet Member for Education is an active member of the Joint Committee. Senior officers contribute to the leadership of school improvement strategies locally, regionally and nationally through leadership of professional networks.

Suitable arrangements are in place to support and challenge schools as a result of evaluations of standards, provision and leadership. Under a new risk based approach factors leading to schools causing concern are identified and shared more quickly and addressed at an earlier stage following implementation of new working arrangements with Challenge Advisors. However, there is a legacy of casework in a few secondary schools where underperformance and lack of resilience in governance and leadership were not recognised quickly enough and in last year's inspection cycles, two secondary schools have been placed in Special Measures.

There is a clear and co-ordinated response to support schools in need of significant improvement and those requiring follow-up visits by Estyn. The rate of improvement is either strong or very good in nearly all schools. Challenge Advisers know their link schools well which has also resulted in better quality pre-inspection reports for Estyn. There is a very close match between pre-inspection reports and the final Estyn outcome in nearly all reports.

Schools fully understand that support is proportionate to need and that underperforming schools receive more support and challenge. There is clear differentiation and definition in the support, challenge and intervention given to schools. Both formal and informal feedback from Headteachers indicates that there is robust challenge for improvement. Effective consultation with Headteacher Federations in Flintshire and through the GwE User Group continue to shape the future development of the service to ensure it delivers the appropriate support across all schools in the authority to enable them to succeed.

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 based on the national model matrix and to agree on an appropriate level of intervention and support. This is supported by robust dialogues with schools and LA officers before the final judgement is reached and submitted for regional and national moderation.

The impact of the work of Local Authority and GwE officers has been more significant in underperforming schools where a high percentage have become mature in their use of data when evaluating and findings trends, identifying areas for improvement and when prioritising courses of action in relation to standards. These schools are characterised by more coherent whole school models e.g. in relation to target setting procedures where more intelligent use of assessments, FFT data, FSM family performance thresholds and lines of regression are used consistently between and across phases or departments. However, a more consistent approach must be taken to ensure that all schools across the performance range are challenged on their performance and specifically on the achievements of individual pupils/groups of pupils.

Regular contacts are made with 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 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. 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, the quality of teaching and assessment and the strength of governance and accountability 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.

Under the standard model, 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 many of those schools have improved radically over the last few years. It is judged that strategies and procedures for challenging and supporting those schools which were significantly underperforming, by GwE and Local Authority officers have been very effective and have resulted in firm improvements. This has been particularly evident in the primary schools in Flintshire and the current

focus has now shifted to secondary schools in the authority where performance is polarising to either 'Excellent/Good' or 'Unsatisfactory.'

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, there has been a shift in practice during 2015-16 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. More capacity within GwE to offer specific curriculum support, particularly in the secondary phase, is being extended and there is emerging evidence that this is starting to have a positive impact on improving learner outcomes by improving the skills of targeted teachers, but also by improving the skills of departmental managers in leading their teams to achieve greater consistency in and between departments.

The current model of GwE support for 'Green' and 'Yellow' schools continues to evolve in order to support these self-improving schools to achieve and maintain excellence. High performing schools are encouraged to participate in peer challenge and support mechanisms, school to school support projects and pioneer programmes. Flintshire schools are disproportionately represented in national pioneer programmes, recognising not only that they have school improvement expertise to share but also their willingness to collaborate. Formal and informal networks e.g. Foundation Phase clusters, subject forums etc. are used to share best practice more widely.

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.

Developing Leadership:

As well as prioritising leadership as part of termly monitoring visits, work with a number of schools and individuals using a targeted approach has been intensified, particularly in the secondary sector. 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. GwE are delivering training across the range of leadership positions, including middle and senior leaders and Flintshire schools are actively encouraged to send appropriately identified staff. 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. Future leaders are identified by senior managers within the Local Authority and opportunities for secondments and filling 'Acting' leadership positions are brokered where appropriate at the invitation of a governing body.

All Challenge Advisers have been trained to act as a member of the relevant Governing Body panel and ensure that Performance Management procedures in

Flintshire schools are completed effectively within the regulations. Effective use is made of the Autumn Term Monitoring Visit to collate evidence for determining possible objectives and progress is monitored in subsequent meetings.

Specific work has been undertaken with schools where Governance is causing concern, including advising, coaching and strengthening governing bodies to increase the rigour of challenge and support within the school community. Bespoke governance support in Flintshire schools is commissioned by Local Authority senior managers through the School Performance Monitoring Group where there is evidence that this requires strengthening. Governing Bodies who have received this additional support have confirmed its impact as positive. The Authority has placed appropriate emphasis on supporting governing bodies to analyse performance data more robustly. As a result, most governing bodies in Flintshire have a good understanding of how their school performs in relation to other, similar schools. 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.

School to School Collaboration:

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 have jointly presented progress with the Flintshire model to a 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, operate as lead practitioners to support peers. In Flintshire, Mold Alun is leading for Science developments across the region. The Secondary Forums have continued to operate with administration and leadership passing over from the Local Authority to GwE. This ensures that there is 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 within the authority's best performing schools.

Promoting and Developing the Welsh Language:

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 Forum 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. The partnership has proved effective in developing and enriching opportunities for learners in individual school communities.

The LA's Welsh Advisory Team provides universal support to all Flintshire schools but also targets individual schools in need of improvement for both first and second language. A comprehensive programme of training is delivered locally and with other LAs in the region. Flintshire actively promotes Headteachers, teachers and classroom support staff to access the appropriate sabbatical courses and take up rates on these

extended courses are one of the highest in the region. Siarter Iaith is used successfully to support and extend Welsh language development in the Welsh medium sector and the authority is beginning to develop a similar approach for English medium schools (Cymraeg Campus) by developing a project based on the successful model used in Pembrokeshire. In the non-maintained sector delivering Early Years Foundation Phase the Local Authority has extended its number of funded Welsh medium settings from 5 to 7 in recent years and all are supported by Welsh speaking Advisory Teachers.

The improvement in Welsh 2nd Language standards at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 over the last few years is positive trend e.g. Level 4+ at KS2 has improved from 53.2% in 2012 to 79.4% in 2016. Level 5+ at KS3 has improved from 71.8% to 86.4% in the same time period, ranking Flintshire 2nd in the region for both phases. The manager of the Welsh Advisory Team is a member of the national panel for Securing Teacher Assessment (STAP) and the whole team are involved in delivering cluster moderation in Welsh for KS2 and 3 which encourages greater consistency and improves teachers' skills.

The take up of the full GCSE Welsh course in Flintshire's secondary schools has been disappointing in the past and too many pupils leave Flintshire schools without any qualification in Welsh. In 2016 71% of pupils in the authority's English medium schools were entered for a Welsh GCSE – 25% taking the full course and 75% taking the short course. In the full course group, 80.4% of pupils achieve grades A*-C. In the short course group 57.4% achieved A*-C. Some pupils undertook and achieved NVQs in Welsh at varying levels. The change to the WJEC examination structure for Welsh GCSE from 2017 onwards where only the full course will be offered should improve participation rates but schools are already reporting concerns about staffing expertise and curriculum time. These issues are referenced in the LA's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan.

However, performance in W1L in the authority's Welsh medium primary schools at Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2 has not improved at the desired rate and is an area of joint focus between the FTPSO, Welsh Advisory Teacher for Welsh medium schools and the GwE Challenge Adviser connected to all five schools.

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 and in 2015 the Network introduced courses for KS4 learners designed to help maintain the place of more learners at their school. The IOSH training provided for staff from all schools the Inclusion Service has facilitated access to Extended Work Experience placements, supporting more bespoke educational packages for pupils.

A Post 16 Steering Group has been established to oversee and drive the local provision for Flintshire pupils. This has been identified as a requirement given the changes made to the provision offered to pupils and comprises of headteachers, FE representation and LA officers.

Post 16 provision – SEREN, post 16 focus group – anything in Jeanette’s section? – I’ve added the info above about Post 16, not done anything about Seren.

Developing the Foundation Phase:

Flintshire’s use of the Education Improvement Grant continues to provide a full-time Foundation Phase Training and Support Officer (FPTSO) and an Early Years Foundation Phase Advisory Team (Early Entitlement). Pupil:adult ratios in Foundation Phase classes in Flintshire are maintained at 1:10 for Nursery & Reception classes and 1:15 in Years 1&2. A comprehensive programme of training on Foundation Phase pedagogy and leadership in both schools and funded settings is delivered throughout the year. Attendance at these professional development sessions is very high and evaluations consistently rate them as very good. There is clear evidence from visits notes and observations by LA and GwE Advisers that these opportunities are impacting positively on practice. Recommendations relating to Foundation Phase practice are rarely included in Estyn reports in Flintshire schools. Local Authority led moderation sessions are acknowledged to be good practice by the GwE Senior Challenge Adviser for Foundation Phase (this is not a consistent feature of all LAs in the GwE region) and even though this moderation activity is not statutory, all Flintshire schools participate. Where pedagogy and outcomes in schools are in need of further development, the LA’s FPTSO and the school’s Challenge Adviser work in partnership to secure a consistent approach to support, leading to more effective improvement. In the case of Welsh medium schools this partnership approach includes the participation of the Welsh Advisory Team. However, the stalling of progress in the Foundation Phase outcomes in 2016 is disappointing and does not reflect the amount of effort being made in this area so it remains an improvement priority for the LA.

Training for the introduction of the Foundation Phase Profile was successfully delivered to all schools and funded non-maintained settings ready for implementation in September 2015. The roll out of this new assessment framework across Flintshire has been successfully achieved and positive feedback received. Since April 2015 each Local Authority, including Flintshire, has contributed to the funding of a Senior Challenge Adviser within GwE from its EIG allocation to improve the co-ordination of support and training, improve the consistency of teacher assessment and moderation and to ensure a very strong focus on raising the achievements of all pupils in Foundation Phase across the region. Flintshire’s Senior Manager for School Improvement and FPTSO influence policy and practice at a regional level with the FPTSO recently taking a lead role in developing and delivering regional training in four out of the six Local Authorities in the north.

Changes to the delivery model for qualified teacher support into funded non-maintained settings to include local teacher practitioners in schools linked to approximately 20 playgroups alongside a reducing central advisory team has been successful. There is clear evidence of settings and schools sharing best practice which is impacting positively on learners, it is encouraging greater partnership working and sharing of resources and most importantly improving the quality of transition for

children from playgroups into school based nursery classes. The central advisory team (Early Entitlement) provide training and support to the teacher practitioners, undertake regular reviews with the schools and settings involved and quality assure the programme.

School Performance Monitoring Group:

Schools that need the most support to improve are challenged by the Chief Education Officer, Senior Manager for School Improvement, Elected Members and GwE officers through the School Performance Monitoring Group (SPMG) to accelerate improvement. The SPMG has been successful in securing improvement in targeted schools, particularly in the primary sector. During 2015-16 and for the foreseeable future, this group will be strongly focused on secondary schools causing concern as the increasingly positive profile of primary sector performance evidenced through learner and school national categorisation model outcomes now means a shift in focus is necessary.

The selection of schools to be part of the Monitoring Group is based on:

- Local Authority/GwE agreed outcomes on 'Capacity to Improve'
- Estyn Outcomes
- Data Profile
- Risk Factors e.g. ineffective leadership, weak governance

From September 2015 this proven methodology has been extended to six Flintshire's secondary schools with aspects of vulnerability and in need of enhanced support and challenge.

The national categorisation system is ensuring 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.

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.

Supporting National Priorities – Literacy, Numeracy & Digital Competence:

A regional Literacy and Numeracy Strategy has been delivered in collaboration with key partners including representatives from schools and Local Authority teams, who are still delivering support on specific aspects of this agenda e.g. Welsh Advisory Teams, Foundation Phase Training & Support Officer, Early Years Foundation Phase Advisory Team. Support continues to be allocated in response to requests from Challenge Advisors and focuses on individual teachers with regards to planning and delivery of the Literacy and Numeracy Framework. In schools where the support is most effective there is clear evidence that it leads to an improvement in the quality of teaching, as noted by Estyn or GwE reviews.

Regular training on aspects of literacy and numeracy continue to be offered to schools through the GwE development programme which is advertised via the GwE website

and are accessed by Flintshire practitioners. Leadership development programmes have been developed by GwE specifically for Literacy and Numeracy co-ordinators to build and extend leadership capacity in schools in order to raise standards. Improving the standardised age scores of more able pupils (115+) across all aspects of the national tests remains a priority.

With the introduction of the Digital Competency Framework from September 2016, all Flintshire schools are currently involved in updating their self-evaluations and developing improvement priorities to support this national priority. Training is being delivered by the regional Digital Leaders on different aspects of the Framework and the use of Hwb and this is being supported by further specific professional development ICT opportunities in key areas supported by the Local Authority e.g. Foundation Phase and Welsh language. Attendance by Flintshire practitioners at these events is high and evaluations are good.

Key sources of evidence	Key issues & challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LA/School Partnership Agreement • Hub meetings • Pre termly monitoring visit briefing documents for Challenge Advisers • GwE termly monitoring visit reports • LA Officer Reports & Visit Notes • Training evaluations • Notes from LA's SPMG meetings • Flintshire Welsh in Education Strategic Plan • Analysis of feedback from stakeholder survey following all termly visits. • Prospectus of GwE Development Programme for Leadership. • School to School Regional Strategy • Action Plan re: deployment of underspend to support School to School Support Strategies • Regional Literacy and Numeracy Strategy • Report to Education & Youth Overview & Scrutiny Committee on Federations & Clusters and school performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 • Increase level of challenge and support for 'coasting' good schools so that they become excellent schools • Further strengthen the role of the Governing Body as a 'critical friend' in schools • Further improve the quality of support to improve self-evaluation and improvement planning in schools • Further develop work to improve the use and quality of the Welsh Language through Siarter Iaith and Cymraeg Campus • Support English medium secondary schools to embed full course Welsh GCSE and improve standards

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

The support for additional learning needs and education inclusion is good. Flintshire County Council is compliant with the requirements of the various Acts. An effective process for updating policies and plans is in place. The Local Authority has delegated resources to schools to meet the needs of children with severe and complex needs. The formula for this budget's allocation has been reviewed as part of a wider funding formula review in Education. 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 (89.7% without exceptions, 98.6% with exceptions for 2015/16). This is significantly above the Welsh average of 68.1% and 94.5% respectively. 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. Most 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 (1 appeal in 2013-2014 and 1 appeal in 2014-15). 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 (PCP) into the national reforms. A second phase of training is underway with a focus on embedding processes following the initial awareness training. A number of Beacon Schools have been identified who have embraced PCP and these are supporting the progression and development of other schools.

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

<p>Key sources of evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SENTW Annual Report • Education Improvement Plan 	<p>Key issues & challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
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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

National statistics have previously highlighted high levels of EOTAS in Flintshire. A number of strategies and initiatives have been implemented to reduce the numbers, supporting the maintenance of placements in schools. These have had a significant impact on the rates of EOTAS, achieving a reduction from the highest rate of 6.1 per 1000 pupils in 2014/15 to 5.0 in 2015/16.

School attendance rates generally follow an upward trend. School attendance is a high priority both for the Welsh Government and local authorities in their aim to improve standards. Flintshire secondary schools have demonstrated a consistent trend of improvement with figures being above the national average for Wales. Unauthorised absence in both primary (0.3%) and secondary schools (0.4%) is significantly below the Welsh average for both sectors and the lowest in Wales for the secondary sector.

The LA has recently set up a steering group to oversee its work in relation to pupil Emotional Wellbeing. The group has representation from health, social services and education, including headteacher representation. The initial project identified by the group has been an anti-self harm pilot targeting secondary schools. This has been identified as a priority across the key agencies and will eventually be rolled out to all schools.

Youth Services in Flintshire are now delivered in an integrated way with enhanced collaboration between providers in all sectors. Youth Justice and Drugs and Alcohol teams have been integrated into the Youth Services portfolio to form the Integrated Youth Provision (IYP) service. The IYP service has a varied scope and reach across all partners and utilises the Welsh Government Youth Support Grant and the Families First grant to support third sector provision. Young people participate well in IYP service activities across all sectors. The service has an outcomes focussed plan to steer direction and to measure impact. Increases in Duke of Edinburgh Award participation and the broadened scope and reach with better outcomes are particularly encouraging. The prevention element within Youth Justice has been enhanced by the collaborative work between all elements of the IYP Staff and volunteers. The plans to co-locate these staff within the new delivery model will further enhance these opportunities. The targeted work with groups has enabled coproduction work with several partners to benefit our most vulnerable young people.

Safeguarding policies and procedures are well embedded. Training needs for individual members of staff are systematically identified and met. The new Corporate Safeguarding Panel provides local multidisciplinary leadership on safeguarding

issues. This links closely with sub-regional and regional Safeguarding Board arrangements and plans.

Key sources of evidence: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Integrated Youth Provision Plan• Safeguarding Policy and Procedure• Attendance Action Plan	Key issues & challenges: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complete PRU and EOTAS review work• Complete integrated delivery programme for youth services
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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 has undertaken the following work:

- New Primary School in Connahs Quay (Ysgol 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
- Hawarden Village Primary school – buildings joined April 2016
- 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 have been approved in relation to Buckley, Holywell, Connah's Quay, Shotton/Queensferry and Saltney.

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. (2014-2019 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. Projects at Holywell Community Campus and the £14.7m post-16 Hub in Connah's Quay were delivered on time and within budget and both facilities were operational as at September 2016.

The balance of the Band A programme is as follows:

- Connah's Quay High School, Phase 1– the project replaces the existing Design and Technology (D&T) block, Art and Food Technology block and will be complete during 2019.
- Penyffordd - the proposed scheme at Penyffordd will amalgamate the current split-site arrangement bringing all primary provision on one site, with completion during 2019.

As at September 2016, Flintshire's level of surplus places was as follows:

- Primary – 1680 unfilled pupil places 15.01%
- Secondary – 1934 unfilled pupil places 20.44%. However, with closure of John Summers High School as of 31st August 2017 Secondary Sector unfilled places will reduce to 14.82% or 1369 unfilled places.

Whilst better than the Welsh average, unfilled places do not yet meet published 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 Council's Cabinet approved the next stage of the School Modernisation implementation programme in June 2015. The following statutory proposals have undertaken and have been implemented post Cabinet determination:

Primary Sector:

- Ysgol Maes Edwin – closed 31st August 2016
- Ysgol Llanfynydd – closed 31st August 2016
- Ysgol Mornant, Gwespyr Picton (WM) – Proposal to close by 31st August 2016. Cabinet agreed that school could seek to form a formal federation with Ysgol Maes Garmon (WM Secondary) – Federation was formalised 5th November 2016.

Secondary Sector:

- John Summers High School – Change of age range from 11-18 to 11-16 by 31st August 2016 and closure of 11-16 School by 31st August 2017.
- St David's, Saltney - Change of age range from 11-18 to 11-16 by 31st August 2016.
- Elfed High School Buckley – Change of age range from 11-18 to 11-16 as of 31st August 2015.
- Connah's Quay High School – Change of age range from 11-19 to 11-16 as of 31st August 2016.
- Holywell High School - Change of age range from 11-19 to 11-16 as of 31st August 2016.

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 Local 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.

Condition Surveys are commissioned via the Council's framework arrangements, on a five year cycle as per national asset management guidance. Suitability surveys are currently being reviewed for all the Council's school stock, these will be complete early in 2017 and will inform the Council's onward investment strategy.

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 and modernisation strategy.

The Local 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. Preparation for 21st Century Schools Band B 2019 -2024 continues.

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 in 2015 to meet the demand identified through sufficiency surveys. The Local 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 Local 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.

<p>Key sources of evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Modernisation Policy 	<p>Key issues & challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring coordination with Local Development Planning to add value to the existing School Modernisation Strategy in meeting current and future needs, as part of developing capital investment priorities within ‘Band B’ of the 21st Century Schools Programme • Capacity to address the renewed programme of school modernisation.
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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 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 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 Local 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:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Service Board Single Integrated Plan • Flintshire County Council Improvement Plan • Revised Operating Structure • Wales Audit Office Annual Report • Annual Report of the School Performance Monitoring Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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

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" features 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.

Good arrangements are now in place to support and challenge schools as a result of enhanced scrutiny of standards, provision and leadership. Underperformance and risk factors within schools are now identified quickly and addressed at an early stage following implementation of revised operating arrangements for and expectations of local challenge advisors. The development of the national categorisation has meant that wider national comparisons can be made on a more consistent basis. The revised secondary schools Vulnerability Assessment Profile is a good example of a development which has had a wide benefit for support services as well as schools.

There is monitoring of school performance through a range of functions. This includes challenge adviser visits to school and analysis of data. This information helps form the judgment on present school performance and capacity to improve. Schools that need the most support to improve are challenged, in person, by the Chief Education Officer and members of the Council's School Performance Management group (SPMG). Pupil performance data is subject to scrutiny by Cabinet and elected members and supports the identification of areas for action.

Relationships with schools are generally good. Regular headteacher meetings and the partnership groups in the consultative structure form an effective mechanism for

raising issues and agreeing actions to tackle them. 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 and school to school support arrangements.

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.

<p>Key sources of evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Service Board Single Integrated Plan for Flintshire • Flintshire County Council Improvement Plan • GwE Business Plan • Integrated Youth Strategy • Quarterly Performance Reports 	<p>Key issues & challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing to build a school-led resilient school improvement system, through enhanced collaborative working
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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 Local Authority's officers focus well on joint planning and resourcing as well as building capacity for continuous improvement. The Local 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 Local Authority. Through the work of the Public Service Board (PSB), the Local Authority and its partners, have joint ownership of priorities and outcomes. These aims are communicated clearly in the Public Service Board's Single Integrated Plan.

The Local 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 Local 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 Local 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 Connah's 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 individual agency 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. A major current priority for the Public Service Bard is a multi-agency integrated approach to referral, triage, assessment and delivery of support for vulnerable children and families.

<p>Key sources of evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single Integrated Plan • Improvement Plan • School Improvement Plan • Integrated Youth Strategy 	<p>Key issues & challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making the most of partners' information on vulnerable families in planning for progression • Maintaining partnership priorities in a time of diminishing resources
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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 are at an unprecedentedly low level in the secondary phase. School balances have increased during 2015-16 in the primary phase. The Authority is proactive 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 schools continue to provide good value for money and the Council is seeking further efficiency within the education system (WAO 2015).

Key sources of evidence:

- Medium Term Financial Plan
- School Funding Formula
- School balances report
- WAO Annual Improvement Report