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Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales



WALES AUDIT OFFICE

SWYDDFA ARCHWILIO CYMRU

**A report on the quality of local authority education
services for children and young people**

in

**Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
Civic Centre
Castle Street
Merthyr Tydfil
CF27 8AN**

November 2012

by

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education
and Training in Wales**

During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the provider's current performance and on their capacity to improve.

In these evaluations, we use a four-point scale:

Excellent

Good

Adequate

Unsatisfactory

The report was produced in accordance with section 38 of the Education Act 1997, the Children Act 2004 and the Learning and Skills Act 2000.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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Context

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council is located in central south Wales. It is bordered by the neighbouring authorities of Powys to the north, Caerphilly to the east and Rhondda Cynon Taf to the West. The total population is 58,851.

In Merthyr Tydfil, 8.9% of people over the age of three say that they can speak Welsh compared to the Wales average of 19.0%. Ethnic minorities account for 2.3% of the population and this is lower than the Wales average of 3.6%.

In 2011, the employment rate in Merthyr Tydfil was 58.9% compared to the Wales average of 66.7%. There were 29.2% of children living in workless households. Of the working population in Merthyr Tydfil, 18.4% have no qualifications, which is higher than the Wales average of 12.1%.

The percentage of pupils of compulsory school age who are eligible for free school meals is 24.8% which is higher than the national figure of 19.3%. This level of eligibility is the third highest in Wales. Twenty-five percent of the areas in Merthyr Tydfil are in the 10% most deprived areas in Wales.

As of 31 March 2012, Merthyr Tydfil had 193 children being looked after by the authority. There were 105 children on the Child Protection register.

Financial context

The Welsh Government's Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) for Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council for 2012-2013 was £1,752 per head of population. The council's SSA per head of population has consistently been one of the highest in Wales in recent years, but was closer to the average in 2012-2013. The council set its overall revenue budget for 2012-2013 at a level 3.7% above SSA, which was the third highest in Wales.

In 2012-2013, the council set its education budget, net of grants, at £43.7 million. As has been the case in recent years, this was slightly above the level of the notional education component within the SSA and represents £4,796 per pupil, which is slightly below the Welsh average of £4,813 per pupil. The council's net education budget for 2012-2013 was marginally lower than for 2011-2012, which was not the case in many other councils.

Total budgeted expenditure on schools, whether delegated or controlled centrally, represents £4,869 per pupil (including grants), a figure slightly below the Welsh average. Welsh Government figures show that the authority delegates 82.7% of the available education budget to schools, slightly more than the Welsh average of 81%. This produces average delegated budgets of £4,040 per pupil in primary schools and £4,631 per pupil in secondary schools, compared with the Wales average of £4,114 and £4,589 per pupil respectively.

Summary

Overall judgement: Unsatisfactory

The local authority's education services for children and young people are unsatisfactory because:

- at all key stages, standards for learners are unsatisfactory;
- exclusion rates are too high, too many young people are not in education, employment or training and attendance rates in primary schools are unacceptably low;
- support for school improvement and for promoting social inclusion and wellbeing is unsatisfactory;
- the impact of youth support services is not evaluated to check that the provision addresses needs; and
- the failure of leaders to implement systems to identify strengths and weaknesses in schools has resulted in a lack of challenge and too little improvement in standards.

However:

- the authority has worked well to improve attendance in its secondary schools over recent years;
- participation in, and the outcomes from, the authority's youth provision is well above the national average;
- the provision for young people educated other than at school, for young offenders and for looked after children, is good;
- children and young people, including those from vulnerable groups, engage well in developing learner voice within the authority;
- the authority meets its statutory obligations well in respect of children and young people with additional learning needs; and
- the reorganisation of post-16 learning has been managed well.

Capacity to improve: Unsatisfactory

The local authority has unsatisfactory prospects for improvement because:

- senior officers and elected members of the council have not challenged underperformance and poor outcomes for learners;
- officers have not provided reports to members that analyse performance data well enough to identify progress and key areas for improvement;
- the local authority does not have in place a robust and continuous self-evaluation process for its education services;
- the local authority has not responded well enough to the recommendations from past inspections including those going back to 2004; and
- the authority lacks effective systems to judge whether initiatives and services have a positive impact on children and young people or offer good value-for-money.

However:

- There is a high level vision emerging within the authority, supported by a commitment from senior leaders, school headteachers and governors, to address the challenges.

Recommendations

- R1 Secure better outcomes for learners at all key stages and analyse and use performance data to identify and address underperformance
- R2 Strengthen the level of challenge to schools and use the full powers available to the authority to improve leadership and management in underperforming schools
- R3 Devise and apply better strategies to reduce the number of young people not in education, employment or training and build upon existing strategies to reduce the number excluded from school and improve pupil attendance rates, especially in primary schools
- R4 Develop a robust self-evaluation framework for the work of the local authority's education services and introduce appropriate and challenging performance targets that drive improvement
- R5 Develop a more rigorous scrutiny framework, supported by data analysis, to challenge the education services
- R6 Ensure that data on the needs and attainment of all pupils with additional learning needs, and of vulnerable groups, is used at a strategic level to identify specific issues and trends that inform service planning
- R7 Evaluate the impact of Youth Support Services in order to adjust the provision and rebalance resource allocation where necessary
- R8 Develop and implement systems to judge whether initiatives and services have a positive impact on children and young people and offer good value for money

What happens next?

The local authority will produce an action plan to show how it will address these recommendations within 50 working days of receipt of the report.

Estyn is of the opinion that the authority falls into the follow-up category of requiring special measures and will inform the Welsh Government of this recommendation.

Any follow-up inspection work will be planned in consideration of other inspection and regulatory activity within an authority. All follow-up inspections will be fed into the Local Authority Regulatory Calendar to avoid duplication and take advantage of any opportunities to work more closely with the Wales Audit Office (WAO) and the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW).

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Unsatisfactory

Standards: Unsatisfactory

The proportion of learners in Merthyr Tydfil who are eligible for free school meals is the third highest in Wales. However, even when these high levels of deprivation are taken into account, performance is well below average.

In 2012, in Merthyr primary schools, the percentage of pupils gaining the Foundation Phase outcome indicator (FPI) and the percentage gaining the core subject indicator (CSI) in key stage 2 were both the lowest in Wales. In key stage 3 in 2012, the percentage gaining the CSI improved more quickly from the 2011 figure than the average for Wales as a whole. However, this was from a low base and performance is the second lowest in Wales. In key stage 4, performance improved at a slower rate than Wales on four of the five main indicators and, on those indicators involving English and mathematics, performance fell by more than six percentage points and is the worst in Wales.

In 2012, the percentage of learners leaving full time education without a qualification improved significantly and is now better than the average for Wales. In the previous three years it was amongst the worst in Wales.

When the performance of Merthyr schools is compared with that of similar schools in Wales, based on the percentage eligible for free school meals, performance is well below average. In all key stages too many schools are below average and too many are in the bottom 25%. In key stage 3 a half of secondary schools are in the bottom quarter and no schools are in the top quarter. In key stage 4 no schools are above average for the level 2 threshold including English and mathematics or for the CSI. Only for one indicator is one school in the top quarter.

In 2011, Merthyr met both of the Welsh Government's key stage 4 benchmarks for performance based on free-school-meal entitlement. It did not meet the key stage 3 benchmark. In 2010 it missed two of these three benchmarks. In 2012 it missed both the benchmarks for key stage 4. Key stage 3 analysis is not yet available.

Progress between primary and secondary schools is good at key stage 3. However in both 2011 and 2012 it is below average overall in key stage 4 although progress on the level 2 threshold is good.

In 2012 the gap between boys' and girls' performance in key stage 2 is smaller than the average for Wales. However in key stage 3 and in two indicators in key stage 4 the gap is larger than across Wales. The gap between learners entitled to free school meals and other learners is larger than the average for Wales in all key stages. Pupils with additional learning needs generally make progress in achieving their individual targets. However, analysis is not consistently available for all groups, including vulnerable learners. In primary schools, most pupils who receive support to improve their literacy skills make good progress and many maintain this improvement

to the end of key stage 2. Reading tests across the authority's schools indicate that nearly 40% of pupils leave primary school with functional literacy levels below expected levels.

In key stage 2 in 2012, performance in Welsh first language was above the Wales average and performance in Welsh second language improved at a faster rate than the average for Wales as a whole. In key stage 3, however, the percentage of learners gaining at least level 5 in Welsh second language was the lowest in Wales in 2012. In 2011, the percentage of learners gaining a full qualification in Welsh second language in key stage 4 was among the best in Wales. However, this was from a very small entry and only represents just over one in ten of eligible learners in Merthyr secondary schools.

Learners gain a good variety of qualifications as a result of opportunities provided in non-formal and informal settings, including work-focused qualifications. In particular, the percentage of learners involved in Merthyr Tydfil Youth Services achieving accredited qualifications is well above the national average.

Wellbeing: Unsatisfactory

Secondary school attendance has improved over the past three years and is currently slightly higher than the Wales average. All four secondary schools are within the top half of schools when compared with similar schools on the free-school-meal benchmarks. However, in primary schools, attendance is not good enough and the pace of progress is too slow. When compared to similar schools, nearly four out of five schools are in the lower half and almost one half are in the bottom 25%.

There have been no permanent exclusions from either primary or secondary schools for the past two years. However, the number of fixed term exclusions has steadily increased in both primary and secondary schools and in 2011 was among the worst in Wales for both shorter and longer exclusions. The number of days lost due to exclusion is also among the highest in Wales. Unverified data for 2012 indicates that the number of fixed term exclusions in secondary schools has reduced.

Children and young people, including those from vulnerable groups, engage well in developing learner voice within the authority. There is a good take-up by young people of the opportunities for representation on strategic groups with officers and elected members. Their involvement has had a direct impact on changing policy.

Overall, the percentage of learners continuing in full-time education has improved at a similar rate to the rate for Wales in recent years. However, the authority has not significantly closed the gap with the Wales average and in 2011 it remained the second lowest in Wales. The percentage of Year 11 young people not in education, training or employment (NEETs) reduced in 2011 although generally the improvement in the percentage of NEETs over recent years has not been as good as the improvement for Wales as a whole.

Twenty-nine per cent of young people in Merthyr Tydfil participate in the local authority's youth service. This is the third highest in Wales and is well above the national average.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Unsatisfactory

Support for School Improvement: Unsatisfactory

The local authority has a new partnership agreement that is detailed, outlines clearly the responsibilities of the local authority and schools and provides a useful structure to support improvement in standards across the authority. All schools are aware of the new system of support. However, arrangements for monitoring and challenging schools' progress have yet to be clarified. The authority has not had an effective system to identify schools' strengths and weaknesses over recent years. As a result, the local authority has not challenged schools appropriately and schools have not improved quickly enough.

The authority has very recently improved its support and challenge to schools. A more challenging analysis of performance data is giving a more accurate picture of standards across the authority. However, processes to evaluate leadership and management in schools are not consistent or rigorous enough. As a result, the authority has not challenged senior leaders in underperforming schools well enough.

Reports on the monitoring of schools are too descriptive and only a few offer a good critical appraisal. In addition, these reports are not focused sharply enough on raising standards. They do not identify strengths and weaknesses or recommend actions specifically enough. The authority does not monitor well enough the quality and consistency of these reports. This means that schools have not received clear feedback on how to improve and progress has been too slow.

Where schools are causing concern, the authority has not intervened early enough or effectively. As a result, in the current inspection cycle, two primary schools were placed in special measures and two were placed in Estyn monitoring. Further, the local authority has not been effective enough in supporting primary schools placed in a category of concern at inspection by Estyn in recent years.

Over the last few years, the authority has introduced initiatives to improve standards of literacy. The authority has recognised that these initiatives have not worked well enough to raise standards and has amended its approach to include an emphasis on reading. It is too soon to measure the impact of this new emphasis. Approaches to improve standards in numeracy are not well developed. Overall, initiatives to raise standards have not been targeted specifically and quickly enough to the particular needs of schools. The authority provides a wide range of choice and opportunities for 14 to 19-year-olds.

The authority provides appropriate training opportunities for middle and senior leaders, including the use of peer mentors. The recent re-constitution of a headteacher forum has been helpful in developing their use of performance data and in disseminating the authority's literacy strategy. However, there is little targeted work in schools where there are weaknesses in leadership and management and where aspects of self-evaluation and school improvement planning are underdeveloped.

The authority provides a wide range of courses to address the training needs of governors, including bespoke training for the whole governing body to support governors in carrying out their roles more effectively. Officers attend governing body meetings to present annual performance reports and governors benefit from data training which gives them a greater understanding of school performance. However, governors are not yet effectively holding headteachers to account, particularly in schools where learner outcomes need to improve.

Support for Additional Learning Needs: Adequate

The authority meets its statutory obligations well in respect of children and young people with additional learning needs (ALN). ALN staff produce all statements of special educational needs (SEN) within the statutory timescales. The percentage of pupils with statements is low. Parents are confident that the authority will meet the needs of their children without the need for a statement and, as a result, there are very few appeals to the Special Educational Needs Tribunal for Wales (SENTW).

The ALN service supports schools well to develop the knowledge and expertise of staff. This includes effective training for all new Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators, which enables them to identify the needs of children with ALN at an early stage and to implement appropriate strategies.

The authority is now collating data on the needs and attainment of all pupils with ALN. However, as this is a recent development, it does not track the progress made by pupils over time. In addition, the authority does not use this data well enough at a strategic level to analyse the outcomes of groups of pupils or to plan services.

The ALN service works well with a range of partners to ensure that they identify the needs of children at an early stage and provide appropriate intervention and resources. Through good collaboration with a neighbouring authority the local authority is able to provide an enhanced service through a Welsh speaking Education and Child Psychologist and a Qualified Teacher of the Visually Impaired.

Parents are well supported by ALN staff. A recent pilot of Person Centred Planning in the special school has been successful in involving pupils more effectively in their learning. The authority is now rolling out this initiative to mainstream schools.

Promoting Social Inclusion and wellbeing: Unsatisfactory

The local authority provides a broad range of targeted services to support vulnerable young people. However, it has not evaluated well enough the quality and impact of its services to promote social inclusion and wellbeing. It does not monitor and analyse data for vulnerable groups of learners appropriately. As a result, the authority cannot be sure that the needs of these groups of learners are met.

A good range of support has significantly increased attendance in secondary schools. However, performance data on attendance in primary schools is analysed and reported less effectively and strategies used to address the issues have been less effective. As a result attendance in primary schools has not improved quickly enough. The authority, in partnership with magistrates, has worked effectively to improve the attendance of children who are persistently absent.

Services that support children and young people to remain in education have not been effective enough at preventing exclusion. However, improvements in the last year, such as pupil support meetings which enable agencies to identify children and young people at risk of exclusion and to co-ordinate appropriate action, are beginning to have an impact.

The authority and its partners provide a few effective programmes to reduce the proportion of young people who are NEET. However, the lack of an overall strategy has limited the authority's progress in substantially reducing NEETs and these remain too high. Secondary schools collaborate well with the authority to provide a good education programme for young people educated other than at school. The support and education provision for young offenders and looked after children is good.

The youth service has a good range of provision and engages with a much higher proportion of young people than the average in Wales. However, the overall impact of wider youth support services is not evaluated well enough, and the authority cannot be sure that the provision addresses needs effectively.

The authority's arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements and give no cause for concern. All relevant staff have a CRB check and there is a policy to update these every three years which is monitored carefully. There is a thorough programme of training; attendance is monitored closely and the impact of training is evaluated effectively.

Access and school places: Adequate

In the primary sector the authority has a lower proportion of surplus places than the Welsh average. In 2011 the proportion of surplus places in the sector was the lowest in Wales having reduced steadily over the last three years. This has included a reduction of 11 (29%) in the number of primary schools since 1996. However, in the secondary sector the total capacity that is unfilled has been above the Welsh average for each of the three years to 2011. In 2011, the total unfilled capacity within the sector placed the authority in the lowest quarter when compared with other authorities. There are no overfilled secondary schools.

Proposals to close sixth forms at all of the authority's secondary schools were approved in 2011 and, in the short term, this will increase further the number of surplus places in the sector. However, the main thrust of the authority's agreed 21st century schools programme addresses this with major projects in half of its secondary schools. These proposals, along with the closure of one of two sites at a third school, will remove surplus places from the sector and reduce the surplus capacity significantly by 2016. In general, these proposals have been managed well.

The authority's arrangements for the assessment of condition, suitability and sufficiency are sound, as are the arrangements for projections of pupil numbers. There is good use of information about local needs to make use of surplus capacity in primary schools for early years and Flying Start provision.

There is an effective School Admissions Forum in place. There is good liaison between services to ensure that the arrangements for the transfer of pupils with statements of SEN between primary and secondary schools are good. Arrangements for admissions for looked after children are effective. However, the authority takes too much time to secure admission for some hard to place pupils in the secondary sector.

The authority regularly reviews the sufficiency of nursery education in its area, and ensures an appropriate level of early years' provision. However, systems to monitor and evaluate standards and the quality of provision in maintained early years are not sufficiently robust.

The authority does not have an up-to-date profile of the range of youth support services or a comprehensive overview of needs. As a result, the authority cannot be confident that these services are effectively co-ordinated and that all needs are met appropriately.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?	Unsatisfactory
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Leadership: Unsatisfactory

The local authority's relationship with schools is generally collaborative and cooperative but, without clear systems to identify strengths and weaknesses, it has not been challenging enough. The lack of leadership at all levels has failed to secure continuous improvement across education services and has resulted in standards remaining too low. Quality assurance of the work of the previous external advisory service was not robust enough to address underperformance in schools.

Officers have not provided reports for elected members which analyse school performance data in enough detail to identify and address key areas for improvement. The scrutiny process has therefore not been well informed about education performance and challenge has been weak. However, there has been a focus in scrutiny on attendance in schools, which has contributed to improvements, although only in the secondary sector.

Raising standards has recently become a priority for the new cabinet and council. This priority is supported by the findings of an externally commissioned report on standards and wellbeing outcomes in its schools. There is a high level vision emerging, supported by a strategy with five key priorities and a commitment from senior leaders, school headteachers and governors to address the challenges. There is not yet however a shared understanding among these stakeholders of what success should look like in the future and this is a barrier to realising the vision.

An appropriate school improvement framework has been put in place by the newly appointed head of the authority's school improvement service. This is supported by system leaders from the regional consortium. It is too recent to have had any impact on the current low standards.

There are clear links between the community strategy, partnership and corporate plans and policies and this is reflected through the current development of a single

integrated plan for April 2013, which identifies learner attainment as one of its four priorities. These improvements, and the adoption at a corporate level of a results-based accountability approach, have not yet permeated to service planning level in education and so cannot drive the necessary improvement.

The Heads of Service for School Improvement, Children's Social Services and Social Regeneration in the Community Services Directorate have started joint discussions to consider how the needs of children and young people can be addressed. This work will focus on attainment as well as wellbeing but is too recent to have had an impact on standards.

Elected members and senior officers have made difficult decisions in relation to school organisation and the removal of surplus places and an example of this is the removal of sixth forms from the secondary schools and the development of a single post-16 Merthyr College initiative.

Quality improvement: Unsatisfactory

The local authority does not have in place a robust and on-going self-evaluation process for its education services. It has been too reliant upon evaluation and challenge from regulators, inspectors and consultants to tell them how well they are doing. As a consequence, it does not know itself well enough.

The local authority provided a self-evaluation report before the inspection. This report is too descriptive, with too little evaluation of first-hand evidence. The report is focused too strongly on 'good news' aspects and consequently it does not adequately evaluate the most important challenges facing the local authority. Although a range of stakeholders were included in the development of the self-evaluation, key elected members were not given sufficient opportunity to influence the report's judgments about quality or standards.

The local authority has recently restructured its strategic planning processes, which brings together key cross cutting priorities well. These priorities inform lower level plans, but they are difficult to track into the objectives set for service plans and for individual officers. Performance targets are not drawn out of effective self-evaluation and are not accurate enough to drive improvement.

The use of Ffynnon for performance management purposes provides a very useful structure to measure and monitor progress against performance indicators and agreed timescales. However, this performance management process does not adequately capture important information about the impact of the authority's work or the difference it is making for learners. Therefore, the directorate's education services are not evaluated well enough to help elected members, services and managers to drive improvement effectively. Council guidance for this level of reporting has recently changed but this has yet to impact on education service reporting.

The local authority does not collect or analyse a wide enough range of data on the performance of all learners, including specific groups of learners. As a result, officers do not know where to best target interventions and whether provision is appropriately

meeting the needs of all learners including those of targeted groups of learners. The Department's reporting of non-schools based education provision is better at using performance information.

The local authority has not yet used its statutory powers to improve under performance in schools quickly enough.

The local authority has not responded well enough to the recommendations from past inspections, including those going back to 2004. As a consequence, many areas for improvement have not moved forward fast enough to secure better services, provision and outcomes for all learners in the local authority.

The local authority has put in place Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in its schools, and has undertaken an evaluation of them. This evaluation has identified important areas for development. These include consistency in the interpretation and the management of the PLC process; the gathering and sharing of data; and the sharing of best practice across groups. The local authority has identified these issues for itself, and has begun to take steps to address them.

Partnership working: Adequate

There is a wide range of appropriate partnerships in place at all levels to engage stakeholders and provide services and experiences for young people. These include the health services, police, business and voluntary sector. Individual partnerships such as the youth offending team have strong outcomes but this is not the case with all partnerships where the approach to monitoring and evaluating outcomes and quality assuring processes is sometimes weaker.

In general, the 14-19 School/College Partnership Network has cost-effective provision of courses. There has been an increase in the number of pupils successfully achieving vocational qualifications in key stage 4 and improved progression routes to further and higher education.

The authority has good arrangements in place to consult with young people and involve them in developing services. The Youth Support Services partnership programme focuses mainly on successful project work to address the areas of greatest need. However, the partnership does not act strategically enough to ensure that young people can access a balanced range of youth support services.

A new Single Integrated Plan (SIP) was recently put in place to rationalise the management of partnerships at a strategic level and improve planning links between service areas and partnerships. This contributes well to more effective use of officer time and better use of resources. The SIP has clear strategic objectives and incorporates the key planning aims of other partners appropriately. A helpful draft needs assessment is in place to identify future planning priorities.

Senior officers are responsible for delivery on key SIP priorities. This enhances the accountability of senior officers well but the Board has not yet ensured that it receives reports on the work of all partners. The partnership uses commissioning and de-commissioning processes appropriately to direct resources to SIP priority areas.

Resource management: Unsatisfactory

The authority is starting to use its recently developed medium-term financial plan (MTFP) to assist with the allocation of resources to its education priorities. However, the authority lacks a robust strategic approach to the allocation of its resources beyond the current year. In addition, some project and service plans, that require additional resources for their delivery, contain no detailed resourcing information. This hampers the authority's ability to manage the allocation of resources to deliver its priorities effectively.

The authority secures a well above average revenue grant funding for a range of children and young people's initiatives. The authority is also investing capital and revenue resources in the education services. Recently, these have included the 21st century school programme, the Merthyr Learning Quarter, a strengthening of the education officer capacity for service delivery and a strengthening of member oversight for schools through a new portfolio lead and a dedicated scrutiny committee. However, this investment has yet to make an impact on the current low standards.

Through the Schools Forum the authority has developed a more effective approach to dealing with school balances and deficits in recent years. The total amount of balances held by schools has decreased over a number of years and is now below the Welsh average per pupil.

The authority lacks effective systems to judge whether initiatives and services impact positively on children and young people or offer good value-for-money. This impedes progress when planning effective service improvements or efficiency savings. As a result, and given the low attainment of pupils, the authority is achieving unsatisfactory value for money from its resources.

Appendix 1

The inspection team

Iwan Roberts	Reporting Inspector
Gerard Kerslake	Team Inspector
Caroline Rees	Team Inspector
Gareth Wyn Jones	Team Inspector
Sarah Lewis	Team Inspector
Mark Champion	Team Inspector
Huw Davies	Team Inspector
Karen Lees	WAO
Richard Parry	Peer Inspector
Linda Thomas	Peer Inspector
Lorraine Buck	Nominee

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available on the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.uk)

Glossary of terms

National Curriculum

Expected National Curriculum levels

- By the end of the key stage 1, at the age of seven, learners are expected to reach level 2 and the more able to reach level 3.
- By the end of the key stage 2, at the age of eleven, learners are expected to reach level 4 and the more able to reach level 5.
- By the end of the key stage 3, at the age of fourteen, learners are expected to reach level 5 and the more able to reach level 6 or level 7.

Core subject indicator in all key stages

The core subject indicator relates to the expected performance in English or Welsh first language, mathematics and science, the core subjects of the National Curriculum. Learners must gain at least the expected level in either English or Welsh first language together with mathematics and science to gain the core subject indicator.

External examinations at key stage 4 or post-16

Core subject indicator – as above.

Level 1 qualification – the equivalent of a GCSE at grade D to G.

The Level 1 threshold – learners must have gained a volume of qualifications equivalent to five GCSEs at grades D to G.

Level 2 qualification – the equivalent of a GCSE at grade A* to C.

The Level 2 threshold – learners must have gained a volume of qualifications equivalent to five GCSEs at grade A* to C.

The Level 2 threshold including English or Welsh first language and mathematics – learners must have gained level 2 qualifications in English or Welsh first language and in mathematics as part of their threshold.

Level 3 qualification – the equivalent of an A level at A* to C.

The Level 3 threshold – learners must have gained a volume of qualifications equivalent to two A levels at grade A* to E.

The **average wider points score** includes all external qualifications approved for use in Wales at the relevant age – for example at age 16 or 18. To calculate this, the total points gained by all learners in the cohort is divided by the number of learners.

The **capped average points score** only includes the best eight results for each pupil from all qualifications approved for use in Wales at age 16.

All-Wales Core Data sets

Schools and local authorities may refer to performance relative to their family of schools. These families of schools have been created to enable schools to compare their performance to similar schools across Wales. Families include schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals, living in 20% most deprived areas of Wales, having special education needs at school action plus or statemented and with English as an additional language acquisition less than competent.