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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

**City and County of Swansea
Civic Centre
Oystermouth Road
Swansea
SA1 3SN**

June 2013

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

The City and County of Swansea is located in south west Wales. It is bordered by Neath Port Talbot in the east and by Carmarthenshire in the west. The total population is 238,691.

In Swansea, 11.4% of people over the age of three say they can speak Welsh compared to the Wales average of 19%.

The employment rate in Swansea is 63.7% compared to the Wales average of 67.3% (in the year ending 31 December 2012). There are 24.4% of children living in workless households.

The percentage of pupils of compulsory school age who are eligible for free school meals is 21%, which is higher than the national figure for Wales of 19.3%. This level of eligibility is the 16th highest in Wales where first is the lowest free-school-meals figure and 22nd is the highest (PLASC 2012)¹. Of the 147 areas in Swansea, 12% are now in the 10% most deprived areas in Wales (WIMD 2011).

As of 31 March 2012, Swansea had 555 children being looked after by the authority. There were 225 children on the Child Protection register.

Ethnic minorities account for 6.3% of the population, higher than the Wales average of 4.2% (in the year ending 31 December 2012).

Financial Context

The Welsh Government's Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) per head of population for Swansea Council in 2012-2013 is £1,614 per head, which is below the Wales average of £1,681. A net revenue budget of £387.7million (excluding specific grants) has been set, which is 0.7 % more than in the previous year compared to an average increase across Wales of 1.2%.

The council set its overall net revenue budget at 100.5% of SSA, on the Wales average and it set the net education budget at a level of 96.5% of its Indicator Based Assessment (IBA), below the Wales average of 98.7%. It should be noted that the IBA is not a spending target, but a mechanism for determining the allocation of Welsh Government support for individual authorities. The net education budget per pupil is £4,595 compared to the all Wales average of £4,813.

The budget delegated to primary schools including specific grants is £3,944 per pupil (lower than the average of £4,114 for Wales). The budget delegated to secondary schools is £4,799 per pupil (higher than the average of £4,589 for Wales). The overall delegation rate for 2012-2013 was 82.5% compared to the all Wales average of 81%.

¹ The Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) is the term used to describe the statutory collections of school information and pupil details, characteristics and curriculum. The main collection takes place in January, from nursery, primary, secondary and special schools.

Summary

Overall judgement: Adequate

Current performance is judged as adequate because:

- performance in key stages 2, 3 and 4 has improved steadily in recent years and performance in secondary schools is good, particularly for those indicators that involve English or Welsh first language and mathematics;
- in the last two years Swansea has met all the Welsh Government benchmarks for performance based on free-school-meal entitlement;
- attendance rates at secondary schools are good;
- the rates of both permanent and short-term fixed exclusions have improved and are better than the Wales averages;
- the authority's commitment to developing the capacity of schools to meet the needs of pupils with additional learning needs themselves, and the work of the service to achieve this ambition, are particular strengths;
- the Prevention and Early Intervention strategy, involving effective joint working between a range of education services and other agencies, has been successful in improving attainment and attendance, and reducing exclusions and youth offending rates;
- the local authority and its partners have a very successful strategy and range of approaches that have reduced the percentage of young people not engaged in education, employment or training (NEET) significantly over the past three years;
- the ambitious school modernisation 'Quality in Education 2020 Programme' is underpinned by clear priorities and has been effective in reducing surplus places and meeting the demand for Welsh education; and
- the authority works well with a range of partners to ensure that children and young people have access to an appropriate range of youth support services.

However:

- primary attendance rates are well below average with nearly half of schools in the bottom 25% when compared to similar schools on the free-school-meal benchmarks;
- too many schools do not improve quickly enough when identified as needing follow-up after a core inspection and too many are in categories of concern;
- the reintegration of pupils in key stage 3 educated other than at school back into mainstream schools and the provision in the key stage 4 pupil referral unit are not good enough; and
- processes to quality assure the work of officers are not effective enough to make sure that all officers consistently challenge all schools to improve.

Capacity to improve: Good

The local authority's prospects for improvement are judged as good because:

- leadership of the council is strong both politically and at a strategic level and shows a firm commitment to improving education services in the City and County of Swansea;
- the leader and chief executive have a clear and ambitious vision for education provision and outcomes for children and young people, which is understood well by senior officers, elected members and stakeholders and addressed directly through strategic plans;
- change has happened at a significant pace in the last two years and has rapidly resulted in an effective multi-agency approach to tackle poverty and to improve opportunities for children and young people and their families;
- senior officers and elected members have demonstrated their willingness to act quickly and to take difficult decisions to improve provision and outcomes;
- the authority has a very wide range of data, which is used well to target interventions and to evaluate its work;
- there are well-established corporate mechanisms to monitor performance, which result in specific actions and interventions for improvement;
- officers evaluate the impact of specific initiatives well;
- Swansea has a well-established track record of partnership working to improve standards and opportunities for learners and their families, with high-level partnership plans and strategies focusing clearly on implementing national and local priorities;
- the authority deploys resources effectively through careful financial management and a developing medium-term financial planning process, and by making good use of data;
- there has been good progress in addressing the majority of the recommendations from previous inspections; and
- the authority has a track record of successfully improving services where shortcomings are identified.

However:

- performance management and quality assurance processes are not applied consistently enough within education services to identify and address underperformance of staff;
- education targets are often not sufficiently challenging; and
- annual reviews of the authority's education services and the self-evaluation report prepared for the inspection provide a too positive analysis of the authority's work in a few areas.

Recommendations

- R1 Develop and implement a strategy to improve levels of attendance in primary schools
- R2 Quality assure the work of officers to secure greater consistency in the level of challenge they offer to schools
- R3 Improve officers' evaluation of the quality of leadership and management in schools to make sure that underperforming schools are identified and supported quickly
- R4 Improve the quality of provision for those pupils who are educated other than at school, particularly to raise standards of achievement and to assist reintegration back into schools
- R5 Improve the consistency of leadership across all education services and the quality of self-evaluation and improvement planning within education services

What happens next?

The City and County of Swansea 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 does not require follow-up.

During all core inspections, the inspection team will consider whether the local authority needs any follow-up activity.

There are five types of follow-up activity:

1. good practice case study;
2. link inspector monitoring;
3. Estyn monitoring visit;
4. significant improvement; and
5. special measures.

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?

Good

Standards: Good

Performance in key stage 2, key stage 3 and key stage 4 has improved steadily in recent years although performance in the Foundation Phase does not compare as well to that in other authorities across Wales.

When schools in Swansea are compared to similar schools based on the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals, performance in 2012 is slightly below average in the Foundation Phase and average in key stage 2. In both the Foundation Phase and key stage 2, too few schools are in the top quarter. However, in key stage 3, performance is good with over a third of Swansea secondary schools in the top quarter and two-thirds in the top half.

Performance is also good in key stage 4, particularly for those indicators that include English or Welsh first language and mathematics. In relation to these indicators, about half of schools are in the top quarter of similar schools, and more than three-quarters are above average. In relation to all five indicators, more than 25% of schools are in the top quarter of similar schools and fewer than 25% are in the bottom quarter.

The Welsh Government sets benchmarks for performance based on free-school-meal entitlement. In 2011 and 2012, Swansea met all three of these expected benchmarks. This is an improvement on previous years.

In key stage 2 and key stage 3, the gap in performance between girls and boys has varied around the average for Wales for the last few years. In key stage 4 in 2012, the gap is smaller than the Wales average in relation to all five of the main indicators.

The gap in performance between pupils entitled to free school meals and other pupils in 2012 is smaller than the average across Wales in key stage 2 and in relation to all five main indicators at key stage 4. The gap is larger than average in key stage 3.

Performance of more able pupils in key stage 2 and key stage 3 is generally above the average for Wales despite the relatively high levels of deprivation in the authority. Almost all pupils with additional learning needs and from other vulnerable groups make good progress against their individual targets.

Reading ages at the beginning of key stage 2 and key stage 3 have improved steadily in recent years. Most pupils on support programmes to improve their literacy and numeracy skills make good progress. The authority does not have data to know whether this progress is maintained to the end of the key stage.

Performance in Welsh first language is very good and in most key stages it is the best in Wales. Performance in Welsh second language is more variable and too few

eligible learners are entered for the full course Welsh second language at the end of key stage 4.

In 2012, the percentage of learners leaving full-time education without a recognised qualification is similar to the average for Wales.

Young people gain a broad range of qualifications in non-formal settings, although attainment on locally recognised qualifications is much better than on nationally recognised qualifications.

Wellbeing: Adequate

Overall, children and young people participate well in a range of activities that help them to develop healthy and safe lifestyles. Participation by children and young people in a range of physical activities is good. The numbers taking part in specific schemes such as the Active Young People programmes, including Dragon Sport and 5x60 activities, compare well with Wales averages.

When schools are compared to similar schools on the free-school-meal benchmarks, secondary attendance is good with about 40% of schools in the top quarter and 60% in the top half. However, primary attendance is well below average with nearly half of schools in the bottom quarter and about four-fifths of schools in the lower half. Too few schools are in the top quarter.

The rate of permanent exclusions is among the lowest in Wales. The rate of shorter fixed-term exclusions is better than the Wales average although the rate of fixed-term exclusions of six days or more is not as good as the Wales average. The average number of days lost for all fixed-term exclusions is slightly higher than the Wales average.

The percentage of learners remaining in full-time education or training at 16 is good and has improved in each of the last four years. The percentage of young people not engaged in education, employment or training is low. It has improved significantly and has halved over the past three years. This compares better to other local authorities across Wales than might be expected given the levels of deprivation in Swansea.

Gathering the views of children and young people is a priority for the council, with the result that they contribute well to the development of policies and decisions that affect them. They contribute well to school councils and to wider consultations such as the 'Big Conversation' and 'Super Survey', through which young people offer their views about issues that affect their lives.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Adequate

Support for School Improvement: Adequate

The authority listens well to its schools and provides good levels of support for them. However, officers' challenge to schools is not consistent or rigorous enough to make sure that underperforming schools improve quickly enough.

The authority uses the regional consortium framework to classify schools according to risk and to plan appropriate interventions. Officers and schools use a good range of data analysis to contribute to this categorisation and to identify groups of pupils who need specific help and support. Headteachers and governing bodies understand well the category their school is in, although they are less clear how this relates to the support they receive. In a minority of primary schools, the categorisation of the school is too generous and does not challenge the school sufficiently to improve.

Officers have commissioned a range of reviews and support for particular schools that are causing concern. These reviews, undertaken jointly by local authority officers and regional consortium system leaders, are effective and include a clear focus on the quality of leadership and management in the school. However, officers do not routinely evaluate all aspects of leadership and management in every school. In a small number of schools, officers have not been aware of the issues that led to the school being placed into Estyn follow-up as a result of inspection.

The quality of officers' written records of visits to schools varies too much. These records are often descriptive and many do not identify clearly follow-up actions for schools or timescales for actions. Many do not identify areas for improvement clearly enough so that schools have an accurate understanding of what they need to focus on in order to improve.

Processes to quality assure the work of officers and the challenge they bring to schools are not effective enough to make sure that all officers carry out this role rigorously and consistently. As a result, too many schools do not improve quickly enough.

Since 2010, three primary schools and two secondary schools have been identified as requiring significant improvement. One pupil referral unit has been placed into special measures. A high proportion of schools identified as needing Estyn monitoring after their core inspections do not make sufficient progress and are subsequently judged to require significant improvement after monitoring visits. The authority has not used its full range of powers to improve underperforming schools. The authority has issued warning letters to a small number of schools although one of these schools had already been placed into special measures by Estyn.

The authority has a good range of literacy and numeracy initiatives to improve learners' skills and raise standards. In particular, the whole authority approach to improving learners' reading skills has been particularly successful. Officers evaluate the impact of specific initiatives well and make sensible adjustments to improve further their guidance to schools. However, the authority does not track the progress of learners who have received additional support through intervention programmes well enough to ensure they maintain their progress to the end of the key stage.

The authority, in partnership with the local university provides good developmental opportunities for aspiring school leaders. It uses mentors and system leaders well to support new headteachers. Officers provide good training opportunities for governors.

Support for Additional Learning Needs: Good

The authority is effective in meeting its statutory duties to ensure that provision for pupils with a statement of special educational needs matches their needs. Good joint working between education and health services ensures that the needs of pre-school children are identified at an early stage, and that appropriate support and resources are provided for these children.

As part of its inclusive approach, one of the authority's main strategic priorities is to develop the capacity of schools to meet the needs of the high percentage of pupils with additional learning needs who are educated in mainstream schools. Its commitment to this priority and the work of the service to achieve this ambition is a particular strength. In line with this strategy, the authority has recently delegated funding for pupils with severe and complex needs. This approach has given schools greater flexibility in determining how they can best meet the needs of these pupils. The authority monitors the appropriate use of this funding robustly.

The Education Inclusion Service works well in partnership with the local university to provide an extensive programme of high-quality training for special educational needs co-ordinators, mainstream teachers and teaching assistants. Managers plan and organise this training well to ensure that every school has a team of staff who have a good understanding of how to support pupils with additional learning needs.

The authority works very effectively with special educational needs co-ordinators to promote good practice across all schools. These co-ordinators provide specialist support and training and are involved in a range of working groups to develop suitable strategies and create helpful resources for supporting pupils with additional learning needs.

The authority uses data effectively to track the progress of pupils with additional learning needs against their individual targets. Where pupils are not making expected progress, officers provide schools with suitably targeted support and challenge.

The authority provides effective support and guidance for parents and carers. This includes clear information on the services that are available for their children, as well as helpful advice from the home liaison officer in relation to the statutory assessment process.

Promoting Social Inclusion and wellbeing: Adequate

The local authority's Prevention and Early Intervention strategy successfully promotes inclusion and wellbeing through effective partnership working with the police, social workers, health workers and other agencies. Children and young people in areas of greatest deprivation benefit from this targeted support.

Data is used well to produce detailed individual profiles for children and young people through the effective use of the vulnerability assessment profile. These profiles identify need and determine the necessary levels of intervention across all services. Schools, education services, the Young People's Service and the Child and Families

Service use this information well to make sure that those learners who need support receive it.

The Prevention and Early Intervention strategy uses a range of well-coordinated initiatives to meet the needs of those identified by the vulnerability assessment profile. The universal services offered by schools and the authority are complemented through useful targeted, early prevention work such as the Parenting Service, Flying Start, the Family Learning Signature, Restorative Practice, Team Around the Family and Promoting Inclusion.

As a result, the authority has improved the co-ordination of multi-agency responses for families who require intensive support to avoid social exclusion. For example, the Promoting Inclusion project has recently been developed to build on the success of previous work to identify at an early stage those young people at risk of anti-social behaviour. This is achieved through effective joint working between education and social services, the police and youth offending services. In a short time, this project has already seen a reduction in reported anti-social behaviour in a small number of areas.

The accurate identification and targeting of initiatives through the consistent use of data by all services and agencies and the provision of well-coordinated and linked initiatives across education, children's services and other agencies have already had an impact. The authority has reduced permanent and shorter fixed-term exclusions, improved secondary attendance, and significantly reduced the proportion of young people aged 16-18 who are not engaged in education, employment or training. It has also reduced youth offending rates and improved the performance of specific groups of learners, including looked-after children.

The authority has a range of behaviour support strategies, which help to keep children and young people in learning. Pupils at risk of exclusion receive appropriate curriculum offers, and the authority uses a managed moves process successfully to help pupils to remain engaged in their education. However, the process of managed moves is informal and until the current draft policy is agreed and implemented officers cannot secure the new school places for all pupils.

Attendance in secondary schools is improving through initiatives such as Restorative Practice. However, strategies to improve attendance in primary schools have not been effective enough. Support from the education welfare service and joint working with school improvement officers is not consistent enough to make sure that attendance improves overall. Targets to improve attendance are not always sufficiently challenging.

The local authority has a good range of provision for those educated other than at school (EOTAS). Pupils successfully reintegrate at Foundation Phase and at key stage 2, but reintegration in key stage 3 is not good enough. The outcomes at key stage 4, for those supported by the range of EOTAS provision, are generally appropriate. However, provision in the key stage 4 pupil referral unit is not good enough.

Young people have access to a good range of appropriate professional support, guidance and counselling services through their schools, in the local community and through telephone and internet support. The impact of the counselling service is well above the average for Wales.

The Swansea Young People's Service was restructured and refocused in 2011-2012. The service now makes better use of management information to monitor and target its work. There has been significant progress in the work of the service since the restructure, and it now takes a more proactive role in local leadership with wider youth support services and is improving how it recognises young people's achievements.

Safeguarding arrangements for children and young people in Swansea have recently been reviewed. As a result, the reporting and monitoring arrangements for safeguarding in education services give no significant cause for concern. However, the local authority does not go far enough to ensure that providers, including schools, carry out required safe-recruitment checks on volunteers.

Access and school places: Good

The authority has an ambitious school modernisation 'Quality in Education 2020 Programme', which is underpinned by clear priorities. Through this programme it has closed, amalgamated and remodelled schools across all phases to improve provision and meet pupils' educational needs. Senior officers and elected members have been willing to take difficult decisions in order to achieve this objective. As a result, since 2009, the authority has significantly reduced the overall number of surplus places to well below the Welsh average as well as providing additional Welsh-medium places to meet demand. Projected figures show that surplus capacity will meet Welsh Government targets in secondary schools in 2013 and in primary schools by 2018.

The council has approved plans and made a commitment to fund the next phase of the programme from 2014. At present, funding for this phase is not fully secured.

Arrangements for forecasting the demand for school places are robust. This has supported effective planning to improve access to Welsh medium education.

The authority's arrangements for assessing the capacity, suitability and sufficiency of its school buildings are good. Integrated working both across the authority and with partners and stakeholders on the development of school modernisation projects is well established. Overall management of the 'Quality in Education 2020 Programme' is effective.

The authority manages admissions well. Only a few parental preferences are not met.

There is an appropriate range of early years and play provision, which meets the needs of children and their families. The authority monitors both the sufficiency and quality of this provision effectively.

The authority works well with a range of partners to ensure that children and young people have access to an appropriate range of youth support services. It has made good progress with updating its mapping and auditing of service provision.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?
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Adequate

Leadership: Adequate

Leadership of the council is strong both politically and at a strategic level and shows a firm commitment to improving education services in the City and County of Swansea. The leader of the council and chief executive have a clear and ambitious vision for education provision and outcomes for children and young people. This vision and the priorities for improvement are understood well by senior officers and elected members, and have been shared with all stakeholders. These priorities are addressed directly through strategic plans and are supported by the recent restructure of corporate management in the council.

In the last two years, improvements to education services have been implemented at a significant pace. The new administration, with the chief executive, moved quickly to place poverty and unemployment, particularly among young people, at the top of its agenda. The authority bases its strategies to improve school performance in the context of the family and the community in which pupils live. This has rapidly resulted in an effective multi-agency approach to tackle poverty and to improve opportunities for children and young people and their families. The development of the Prevention and Early Intervention Service has already led to improvements in attendance, exclusion rates and attainment. Senior officers recognised the need for greater targeting of resources and have already appointed a head of poverty and prevention to drive this. The authority has appropriately used its experience of successfully improving its Child and Family Services to support this work.

Senior officers and elected members understand well the challenges facing the education service. They acknowledge the need to address underperformance in schools and in services for children and young people. The leader and the chief executive have engaged well with head teachers and undertaken a programme of school visits, and have acted quickly to begin to address issues of concern to schools such as dealing with underperforming staff.

This strong leadership is not consistently replicated at all levels. Performance management and quality assurance processes are not applied consistently enough within all education services to identify and address underperformance of staff. Not all officers have high enough aspirations for the performance of schools. However, senior leaders and elected members recognise the need to make accountability processes more robust and to increase the level of challenge to officers and schools in order to raise standards. They have already demonstrated their willingness to take difficult decisions, for example over school closures, and staffing and financial issues. The chief executive has already established an improvement board to address shortcomings in education services and to report to the Education Leadership Board chaired by the leader.

The education directorate's five year business plan is underpinned by annual service action plans. However, not all action plans contain sufficient detail to ensure that officers are clear about what they need to do to bring about improvements and to enable the work of the directorate to be monitored effectively.

Since the last inspection, the authority has strengthened scrutiny arrangements. Following two successive restructures in 2012, there is now a single scrutiny programme committee supported by inquiry panels and working groups. These arrangements have increased the number of elected members engaged in scrutiny and enabled members to look at themes across a range of services that are matched to their particular interests. The council has established a performance committee to address standards in schools. However, members do not receive sufficient data at individual school level to enable them to accurately identify those schools that are underperforming. The performance committee has not concentrated sufficiently on challenging underperforming schools in recent months.

The Local Service Board is developing shared priorities to make sure that key partners work together to help those in greatest need. It has an appropriate focus on developing effective scrutiny arrangements, ensuring the accountability of partners for the delivery of identified priorities and establishing robust performance management and resource arrangements.

Quality improvement: Adequate

The authority uses well a very wide range of data and other qualitative information to target interventions and to evaluate the impact of its work. There are good arrangements for consulting with a range of stakeholders including the Swansea Voices Citizens' Panel. The authority has recently strengthened its approaches to listening to the views of children and young people. Annual perception surveys, and regular headteachers' and specific partnership meetings are effective in helping to identify priorities.

There are well-established corporate mechanisms to monitor performance. Regular schools' issues meetings, which focus particularly on schools identified as being 'high risk', are used to inform the Education Performance and Financial Monitoring process. As a result of these discussions, officers determine specific actions and interventions and identify areas that need to be addressed through collaboration with partners.

Quarterly and annual reports of progress provide an appropriate means of tracking the impact of the authority's work in areas identified as priorities. However, in many cases education targets are not sufficiently challenging and consequently the reports do not provide a robust evaluation of performance. The authority is strengthening its arrangements to produce more outcome-based reviews of its work. At present, reviews of progress in delivering priorities focus largely on describing actions that have been undertaken rather than analysing the impact of this work on achieving objectives.

Officers evaluate the impact of specific initiatives well. However, annual reviews of the education service and the self-evaluation report prepared for the inspection

provide a too positive and not sufficiently self-critical analysis of the authority's work in a few areas. The report accurately identifies appropriate areas for improvement for most quality indicators. However, directorate and service business plans do not contain explicit cross-references to the areas identified for improvement in the self-evaluation report.

There has been good progress in addressing the majority of the recommendations from previous inspections. Officers have taken effective action to reduce surplus capacity in schools and to improve the condition of school buildings. There are suitable arrangements for performance management of partnership work and activities co-ordinated by the Children and Young People Strategy Unit. The Partnership has recently introduced an appropriate quality assurance framework for its activities.

However, the authority has not yet implemented suitably robust quality assurance of officers' work or ensured consistency of challenge and support to all schools. The recently adopted scrutiny and overview arrangements have the potential to improve the level of challenge to the quality of services and support policy development. However, these arrangements have not had enough impact on enhancing provision and improving outcomes for children and young people.

Partnership working: Good

Swansea has a well-established track record of partnership working. Senior leaders of public services support well joint working to improve standards and opportunities for learners and their families. They are strongly committed to the work of the Children and Young People's Partnership and the Local Service Board.

Within the authority, elected members lead this commitment well. They set a clear direction and initiate specific policies to improve outcomes for children and young people. This has accelerated the pace of change and informed priority actions. The establishment of the Prevention and Early Intervention Service improves the co-ordination and effectiveness of partnership work, particularly with the revised Young People's Service and youth support services. The authority's commitment to embed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child within the authority's policy framework, designed to recognise the rights of children and young people across all of the authority's functions, is exemplary.

High-level partnership strategies and plans focus clearly on national and local priorities. Good cross-representation from the Children and Young People's Partnership to the Local Service Board helps ensure that existing priorities are mapped appropriately against those of the single integrated plan 'One Swansea'. The Partnership uses an outcome-based accountability methodology well to plan and monitor provision. This approach demonstrates clearly the impact of activities and initiatives on key outcome areas.

At service and team levels, priority aims and objectives from strategic plans are not always translated well enough into effective action plans with specific performance measures. Data is not used well enough to show the full impact of non-formal and

informal learning and youth support services on learners, or to plan for youth support services.

The success of the Local Service Board and the Children and Young People's Partnership priority to reduce the numbers of young people aged 16 to 18 years who are not engaged in education, employment or training is significant. Excellent joint working and detailed, focused planning arrangements ensure that the model is very effective. This success has contributed directly to the Local Service Board prioritising plans for work with 18 to 24-year-olds not engaged in education, employment or training opportunities, based on the same model.

The authority works with five other authorities in its regional consortium for school improvement, which operates in three local hubs. However, the authority has not collaborated well enough within its own hub to deliver school improvement effectively.

Resource management: Good

The authority deploys resources effectively through careful financial management, a developing medium-term financial planning process and by making good use of data. It has used its own resources well to prioritise the delegated schools budget and the pupil-specific areas within the non-delegated budget. It can point to specific improvements in outcomes for particular groups of learners as a result of this approach. Quantifiable and significant efficiencies have been achieved through better procurement, reviewing services and collaborating with others. However, the regional consortium for school improvement is currently not being used to maximum benefit.

The authority has significantly increased its delegated schools budget rate to the fourth highest in Wales, partly through delegating its budget for severe and complex needs. By thoroughly reviewing all aspects of its non-delegated budget the authority is working purposefully to meet or exceed the expected 85% rate.

Although there is a rising trend in the level of school financial reserves these are carefully monitored by the authority and the Schools Budget Forum. Schools are challenged appropriately to reduce deficits and surpluses. Balances are higher in primary schools than in secondary schools and there is a small number of primary schools with balances that are too high. The authority is prepared to use its powers to recover funding if reserves are not used effectively enough.

The authority undertakes an annual satisfaction survey on service level agreements that provides useful feedback on the sufficiency, suitability and performance of the support services that it supplies to schools. Information from such surveys is used well to improve or enhance services. The authority works closely with the Schools Budget Forum to undertake a rolling review of all service level agreements.

The council is committed to modernising and improving the physical condition and the learning environment of its schools. It has already committed considerable funding to the first phase of its 'Quality in Education 2020 Programme' and has an agreed strategy to raise the required £31.3m match funding. The uncertain

economic climate means that the council faces considerable challenges and risks to financing the entire programme to completion. However, the council is clear about its current funding options and the choices it will have to make to deliver the programme.

Given the levels of spending, the manner in which resources are deployed and the outcomes achieved overall, the education service provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

The inspection team

John F Thomas	Reporting Inspector
Mererid Stone	Team Inspector
Huw Collins	Team Inspector
Gerard Kerslake	Team Inspector
Liz Miles	Team Inspector
Caroline Rees	Team Inspector
Jane Taylor	Team Inspector
Louise Fleet	WAO
Paula Ham	Peer Inspector
Sandra Aspinall	Peer Inspector
Robin Brown	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.