

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales

Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Children, Young People and Education Committee

Cyllid wedi'i dargedu i wella canlyniadau addysgol | Targeted Funding to Improve Educational Outcomes

TF 12

Ymateb gan: Gwasanaeth Cyflawni Addysg i Dde Ddwyrain Cymru

Response from: Education Achievement Service for South East Wales

Regional Context

The EAS is the school improvement service for the five Local Authorities (LAs) in South East Wales (Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen). The number of pupils of compulsory school age in 2017 was 71,234. This represents 19% of all pupils in Wales. There are 240 maintained schools in the region, 16% of all maintained schools in Wales (EAS figure correct from Jan 2018, Wales figure from PLASC, 2017). The percentage of pupils of compulsory school age who are eligible for free school meals (FSM) is 18.5%, which is higher than the national figure of 17.8%. This level of eligibility is the second highest of the four regional consortia (PLASC, 2017). In the region, 10% of people aged three and over say that they can speak Welsh compared to the Wales average of 19% (2011 Census, ONS). The percentage of pupils aged 5-15 from an ethnic minority background is 9.7%, an increase from 7.3% in 2013. This is a similar rate of increase to that nationally (10.1% from 8.3%). These overall figures mask significant differences between LAs, with the proportion of ethnic minority pupils in Newport increasing from 23.0% to 23.7% in 2017. As of March 2017, 816 children in the region are looked after (LAC) by a LA and attend a school in the region. This represents 14% of LAC in Wales.

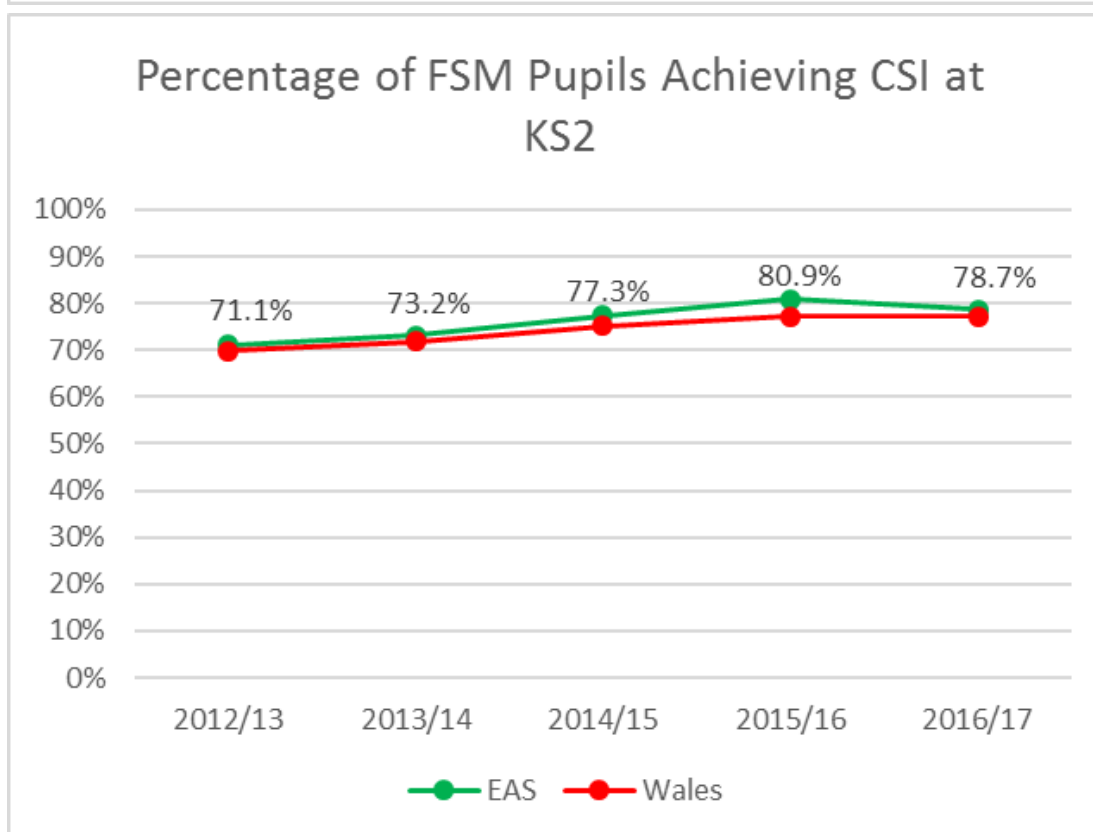
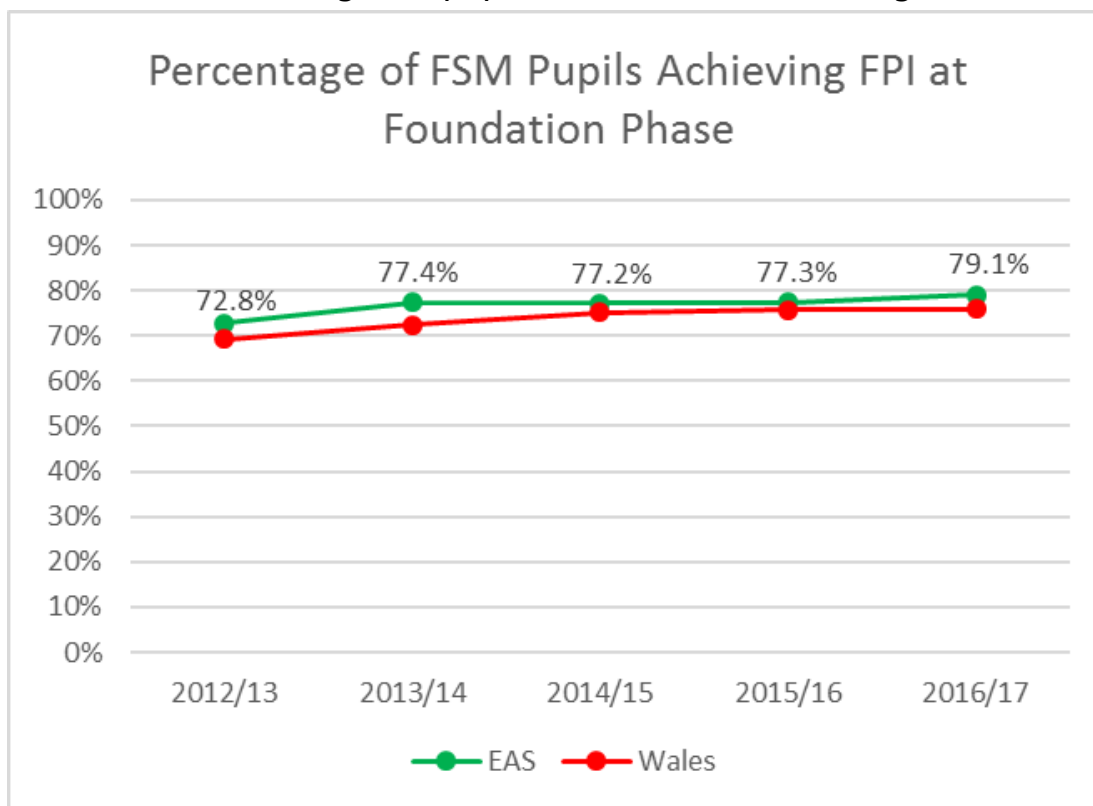
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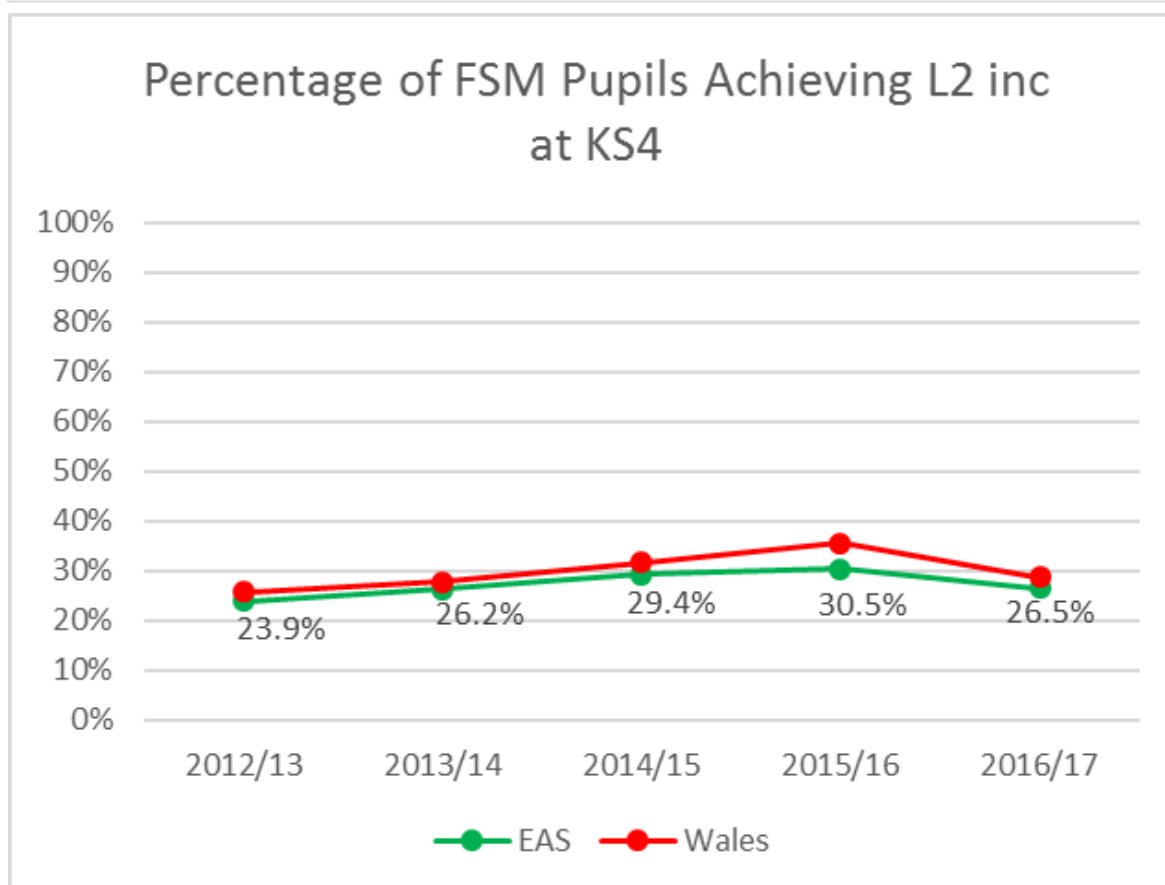
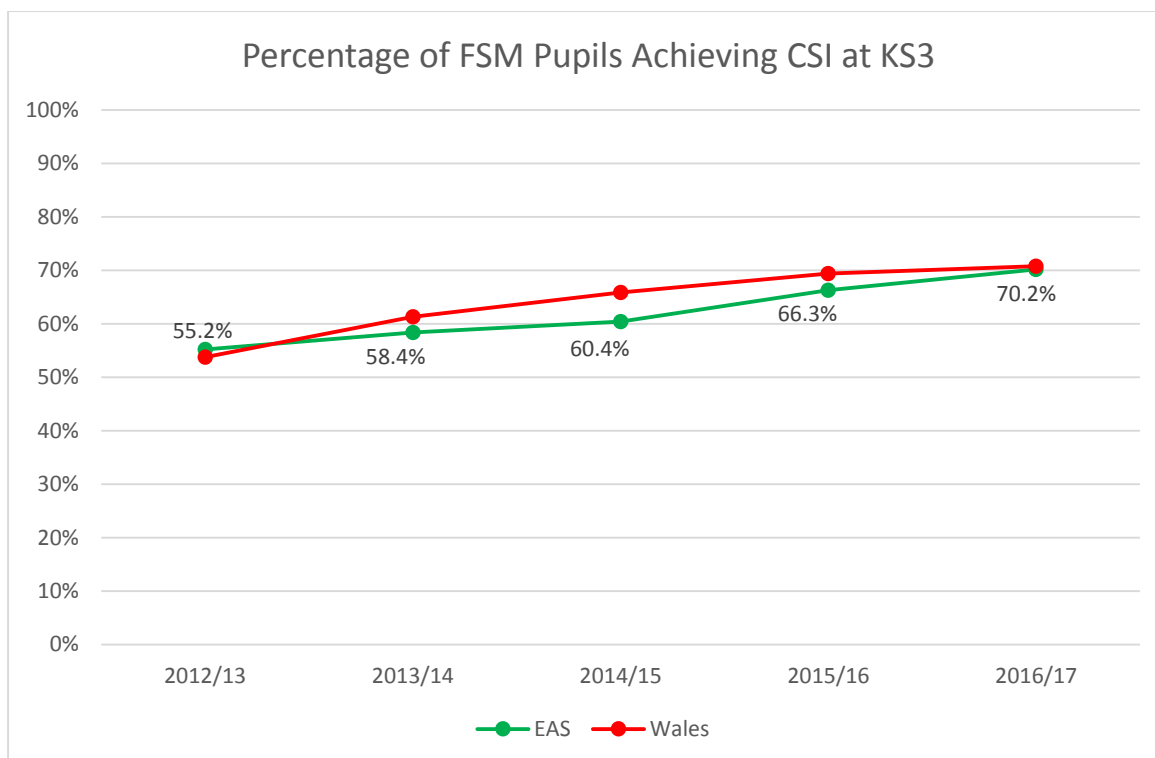
Areas for Enquiry:

- **Schools' use of the PDG and the extent to which this benefits the pupils it is designed to be targeted at;**
- **The relationship between PDG-funded support for pupils eligible for free school meals (eFSM) and expenditure on activities designed to improve attainment of all pupils.**

There is a regional strategy for Closing the Gap which is being further developed and refined to ensure a more holistic approach. There is an acknowledgment that despite the work completed to date the pace of improvement for vulnerable learners, particularly in key stage 4 remains too slow and too variable. The focus for the Regional Professional Learning Offer for 2017/2018 therefore encompasses a wider scope and focuses upon the

research more fully in this aspect of work. Appropriate emphasis is given to activities designed to accelerate the progress of FSM learners and approaches to gain first-hand evidence of the impact of this work is priority for all EAS curriculum teams. Regional pupil outcomes across the region are below:





The appointment of the PDG curriculum lead from September 2015 has been important in developing the overarching EAS and school collaboration on this priority. There is now a much sharper regional focus on the use of data for

FSM learners. Cluster data packs have been developed which detail FSM performance at the end of each key stage set against the total PDG allocation for each school and the cluster as a collective. This additional layer of information supports Challenge Advisers when discussing and agreeing PDG allocation. The potential outcomes for FSM learners are captured through progress towards targets collections in March and June.

Challenge Advisers and school leaders have been trained on the use of the Sutton Trust Toolkit through a series of workshops and there is an agreed process by which PDG spend is agreed by Challenge Advisers in line with best practice and grant terms and conditions. Headteachers have received update training on the new PDG terms and conditions and the requirement to re-balance the funding between key stage 3 and key stage 4.

Improved analysis of the regional data for vulnerable learners have led to the enhancement of the 2017/2018 Professional Learning Offer for Equity and Wellbeing. New activities including but not restricted to have been added: Child Development and Wellbeing Workshop; Growth Mindset; Cluster Based workshops – the Equity and Wellbeing Strategy Pack; Family Engagement Officer Network; PG Cert Equity in Education; Evidence Based Approaches to Addressing the Challenges of Poverty workshop; Leadership and Governance for Closing the Gap; Research Findings Workshops; Looked After Children (LAC) Support Offer; Key stage 2/3 Reading Transition and supporting the teaching through a bank of resources for EAL. Early feedback on these resources has been positive.

In the 2014 the EAS Governor Survey 74% of governors advised that they understood the priorities and outcomes of PDG/ EIG. Link Role guidance (including PDG) was issued and all governing bodies encouraged to appoint a Closing the Gap (PDG) Governor. In the 2015 survey, this had risen to 78.11% with a further small increase in 2016 to 78.83%. At the end of the spring term 2017 the region had 172 Closing the Gap Governors (71%) this will increase during the autumn term as the role is included on the agenda for the AGMs. 87% of Heads agreed that governor training has made governors more aware of PDG. On line training to support governors understanding of PDG and other grant streams has been developed in Summer 2017. In addition, a bank of resources has been provided to all governing bodies to assist them in challenging the allocation of PDG and to provide a bank of exemplary questions to enable effective monitoring of impact of the spend of the grant on FSM learners. During 2016/2017 an online training app has been developed for governor induction. In the evaluation of the pilot 94% found the content appropriate and the app easy to use. This will now be rolled out in autumn 2017 and the data training app will be developed.

The processes by which the region engages more effectively with wider LA services to develop the Regional Anti-Poverty Strategy is underdeveloped and is an area for development identified within the Business Plan. The approach to Wellbeing through a series of LA-based wellbeing projects and work with the LNS has only recently been introduced. This will result in an agreed definition of wellbeing that will operate across each cluster; the identification of a cluster-wide mechanism for measuring and tracking learner wellbeing and the publication of documented guidance to schools which will focus on: Maximising wellbeing through the learning environment; Planning for wellbeing in the curriculum; Ensuring wellbeing through teaching, learning and assessment; Supporting wellbeing through support services in the school; The link between wellbeing and progress and standards; The use of pupil voice to enhance and capture wellbeing in school; and the analysis of the beyond-school partnership model for supporting wellbeing across the school community.

The research profile commissioned from HEI partners in December 2016 includes the following topics: Network groups in primary and secondary schools and their impact on leadership; The Professional Learning Programme; Closing the gap; Determining the relationships between pedagogy, disposition to learn and wellbeing; Reframing impact capture and aligning activity to outcome; and analysis of the factors impacting on achievement of more able learners. Interim reports have been received from all research partners, with the final reports received in July 2017. The content of these reports have helped to shape the regional direction for the development of key strategies.

It is important to note that consortia are just part of the provision. Local authorities have a range of services to support these vulnerable pupils including attendance, ALN support, youth service and social services. This area of work will remain a high priority on the Business Plan for the coming years.

More Able Learners

Improving the progress and achievement of more able learners across the region are also a prominent feature of the current Business Plan. The appointment of a regional lead for this aspect of work has helped to accelerate key actions. Through the creation of a regional strategy group and engagement with The National Association for Able Children in Education (NACE) a draft regional strategy for More Able has been created and was launched through a well-attended Conference in February 2017. Work continues in this area with planned training for More Able Coordinators in schools early in the autumn term. In addition, the Regional Professional Learning Offer for 2017/2018 is now more appropriately focused on providing support and guidance for more able provision. Learning Network Schools have

been appointed through the summer term who will assist in the delivery of the offer.

The EAS Seren Project for more able and talented (MAT) year 12 learners was successfully launched in October 2015. This is an established partnership with all sixth forms in the region and Coleg Gwent. The full impact of this project is too early to judge. All 24 schools with a 6th forms and the 2 Coleg Gwent A level campuses have learners on the Seren programme. In 16/17 there were 246 learners on the programme, compared to 248 in year 15/16 and 253 in 17/18. Oxbridge, Russell Group and Sutton Trust 30 – nearly all schools report an increase in applications to these group of universities since the start of the Seren programme. Following A' level results in 16/17: 63% of all Year 13 learners who gained a place at a Sutton Trust 30 /Russell Group university were Seren learners; Of the 63%, 4% of Seren learners gained places at Oxbridge.

The EAS Seren programme for Year 12 learners was launched in 15/16 and in 16/17 we had the first cohort of Seren learners apply to University. Therefore, this is the first year that we have been able to gather relevant data for Seren learner destinations and this will be used as a benchmark for the Seren programme moving forward.

All 6th forms in the EAS region now have ALPS data reporting and in 16/17 was the first year to be able to view value added performance across all schools on an equal platform. Overall, in 16/17 the most able learners with the highest GCSE points scores performed very well at A' level.

PDG – Looked After and adopted children

Areas for Enquiry

Regional consortia's use of the PDG on looked after and adopted children, and the impact this is having;

The Pupil Deprivation grant is a Welsh Government Grant to improve outcomes for learners who are currently Looked after and Formerly Looked After who are educated within the South East Wales region It is intended to overcome the additional barriers that prevent this group of learners from achieving their full potential.

This is the 3rd year that the grant has been allocated to the regional consortia. During the first 2 years the region began to develop a strategic regional approach developing systems and processes to coordinate the grant at a regional level. The 3rd year will consolidate Regional arrangements that are in place at a consortia level and further develop the school to school working on

a cluster basis to ensure the grant is allocated consistently and that capacity is built within each cluster to support LAC pupils. The Regional Steering group will continue to oversee and quality assure the use of the grant across the region and facilitate the sharing of good practise across the region.

The Regional LAC Coordinator will continue to work with Welsh Government and the other regional leads to develop and implement the national Strategy and ALN reforms working towards embedding personal centred planning for looked after pupils. The EAS will continue to work closely and constructively with the 5 South East Wales authorities, schools and other partners to develop effective interventions that support the improved educational outcomes of this group of learners and to ensure they reach their full potential. We are looking to build sustainability with our plans by developing the school to school networks and sharing practice across the region and wales.

In the 2017/18 financial year, the grant will continue to be held centrally by the EAS but will be allocated on a cluster basis. Each cluster will be allocated a proportion of the grant monies based on submitted pupil numbers. The Clusters are invited to submit one application showing how they will work together on a school to school basis to meet the needs of eligible pupils in their schools.

There are 3 key areas for funding for 2017/18:

- Regional Coordination
- Training Plan
- Building Capacity and school – school work.

During the 3rd year of the grant the EAS have continued to develop their regional strategy and embed our processes and systems to coordinate the grant at a regional level. In March 2017 we had 816 young people who were Looked After and attending schools in the region. In 2017/18 the region has allocated funding on a cluster basis to ensure all schools have access to funding for the pupils eligible for this grant.

This approach also ensures where pupils move schools in our area they are still able to access support from the grant. Regional guidance with exemplar forms were developed to support schools in developing their plans. LAC pupils living in England for whom we are corporate parents have also been contacted and asked to submit a plan with the pupil targets for the year. In the summer term 2017 we have been working with Early years non- maintained and Foundation Phase settings, Post 16 and Voluntary Sector providers to share the regional strategy. They have been included in the training programme as they support our young people throughout their educational settings.

As part of the service level agreement we have with schools who receive funding they produce evaluations and case studies on the interventions and support they have undertaken. This evaluation of their plans enables us to develop our strategy and programme for the year. The evaluation outcomes from all the regional training events are closely monitored and any shortfalls addressed. The overall response to the training events to date are very positive and training well attended.

Targets for LAC learners

Targets for the progress and attainment of LAC pupils are set locally at school level, and these are then collated by the EAS, Learning Intelligence service. These targets form part of a regional approach to collect and disseminate targets set for all children and young pupils. The information for LAC pupils is being analysed by the LAC coordinator, and shared with the respective local authority through the information sharing protocol in place.

Through target setting meetings in all schools, challenge advisers discuss the progress of all learners including LAC learners. In addition each of the Local Authority LACE coordinators share their performance data for attainment, attendance and exclusions using the new all Wales template and other LA data sets to look at trends and look at any issues that may be arising.

Training

The training programme for 2017/18 had been developed in consultation with schools/carers and practitioners. We focus on roles and responsibilities of key staff supporting our young people and training for foster carers to help them support young people with education in the home. In 2017/18 we have developed new courses in line with current issues such as:

- Support for school with Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers
- Work with the Gwent Missing Children Project supporting schools with pupils going missing and looking at Child Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking's
- Personal Centered Planning and work towards the new ALN Bill.

Enhancing Capacity

The region has 252 schools that have been grouped into 38 clusters. 36 primary and secondary clusters and 2 clusters one for the Special Schools and one from the Pupils Referral Units. In the summer term each cluster submitted a detailed plan to show their strategic support for pupils within the cluster. Further development of School to School working is a key focus in 2017/18 where schools within clusters can develop and share their knowledge and

expertise. The majority of the plans are to develop support for pupil's Social and Emotional Wellbeing, reduce exclusions and raise attainment.

Regional Planning

The links with the other lead coordinators and particularly links with the other consortia leads have been positive in sharing knowledge/best practice and joint planning. The EAS Lead Coordinator has been part of several task and finish groups including the development of a guide for Designated teachers, LAC Data template and Chairing the PEP/IDP expert group. The lead post continues to enable the region to map out a strategic view of the LAC/former LAC population within the region and their educational needs. Work with the Early years settings, Post 16 providers and Voluntary sector providers is developing.

Regular half-termly meetings have been established between the EAS LAC Coordinator and Equity and Wellbeing lead to further enhance collaborative working and share knowledge of initiatives aimed at supporting vulnerable learners. The Lead coordinator and Equity and Wellbeing advisor have been working with the regions Learning Network Schools for Equity and Wellbeing to look at training and support that can be provided for schools across the region for LAC and vulnerable learners.

School Challenge Cymru, SCC

Areas for Enquiry

- **The impact of the Schools Challenge Cymru programme and the consequences of its closure on the participating 'Pathways to Success' schools;**
- **How the lessons and legacy of Schools Challenge Cymru can be used to complement subsequent policies and initiatives aimed at improving educational outcomes;**
- **Evaluation of attainment data in light of the PDG and Schools Challenge Cymru programmes;**

There were 14 schools across the region that were identified to become part of the SCC Programme. Each of the LAs apart from Monmouthshire had schools that were included in the programme. As a consequence of the high number of schools within the programme the region benefitted from significant resources that were aimed at improving the capacity of schools to support each other. For example, this funding enabled the region to establish networks of professional practice to support the development of leadership and pedagogy. These networks have grown and have gone from strength to strength. The region views the investment in building capacity of schools and

the development of networks of professional practice as a strength of the programme.

The rate of improvement in schools within the SCC programme was compared with non SCC schools for both FSM learner performance and for all pupils. In summary: Out of the 14 Schools

Challenge Cymru (SCC) schools, only 4 demonstrated a two-year consecutive improvement at the Level 2 threshold including En/We and maths since 2014 there was a decline in the performance of 8 SCC schools in 2016, 4 with a decline of more than 5 pp. Out of the remaining 22 non-SCC schools, 8 demonstrated a two year consecutive improvement since 2014. There was an improvement in 15 non-SCC schools in 2016. Non-SCC schools have seen an improvement at the Level 2 threshold including En/We and maths over the last 3 years from 58.3% in 2014 to 62.4% in 2016, an increase of 2.4pp. Despite SCC schools improving from 44.6% in 2014 to 48.7% in 2015, this improvement was not sustained in 2016 as SCC schools saw a decline of 0.5pp.

With the conclusion of the SCC programme in March 2017, regional transition arrangements were agreed. This included the early transition from the SCC Accelerated Improvement Board (AIB) approach to the EAS Education Improvement Board approach (this approach was built upon the principles used in the SCC programme) in identified vulnerable schools in each of the 3 LAs. In addition, the EAS provided transition training for all headteachers and chairs of governors in SCC schools to ensure a thorough understanding of regional processes and expectations. Since the end of the programme there has been a change of Challenge Adviser in many of the previously SCC schools.

A snapshot of lessons learnt from the SCC programme:

- The use of school networks and support mechanisms from within and beyond Wales is critical.
- There needs to be effective line management and clear lines of accountability for Challenge Advisers.
- The use of Accelerated Improvement Board to hold schools to account regularly for progress are effective and have been utilised across the region.
- The focus for school improvement needs to be on all aspects of leadership and provision and not solely on the end of key stage 4.
- More focus needs to be placed on the quality of school improvement planning and the accuracy of self-evaluation judgements made by school leaders.

- Effective links need to be made into LA wider services to ensure that schools make effective progress. The region has strong links with each of the LAs to ensure this is the case.
- Cabinet Members for Education, LAs and Regional Consortia need to have clear roles in holding schools to account.

Since the end of SCC funding the region has taken the most effective elements from SCC and has integrated these into regional systems. Use has been made of the external review of the programme, as appropriate, to assist decision making in how the region approaches school improvement activity.
