Recommendations following the Estyn Inspection

November 2022

R1 Improve the corporate leadership of education services			
Estyn Comments	**Theme**	**Actions**	**Success Criteria**
1.1 Whilst there have been some positive developments in provision for pupils with additional learning needs, the quality of planning for future provision is variable.	**Inclusion and ALN**	LMM - Visioning sessions LMM - Inclusion working group set up LMM/JS/LJ - and Vision revisited LMM/JS/LJ -Inclusion strategy created, based on the vision LMM/JS/JW - Planning for additional resource bases	- Clear vision for inclusion which drives all planning - Key stakeholders drive inclusion planning - Inclusion strategy in place – short/mid- and long-term goals - Additional resource bases ensure no capacity issues in resource bases
1.2 Despite strengths in education services, corporate leaders have not ensured that their vision and strategic aims for education are fully understood by other officers, elected members, school staff and external partners.	**Education vision**	DMT/key LA officers - Revisit vision DMT/key LA officers - Visioning sessions DMT - Ensure vision underpins self-evaluation and improvement planning DMT - Increase visibility of vision e.g. email signatures, letter heads DMT - Ensure vision is shared with and understood by all key stakeholders e.g. Joint HT meetings, members briefing	- Clear vision for education underpinned but clear purposes - Vision understood by all key stakeholders - Vision drives all improvement planning
1.3 Despite recent closer working between colleagues in education regarding the planning of provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN), data is not always used effectively enough to inform long-term planning. This is illustrated by the recent decision to increase capacity at a special school by nearly 40%.	**ALN**	LMM/JW/JS - Closer working between Inclusion and Transformation LMM/JS/JSi/CS - Closer working with Youth service, early years, ALN officer for EY, Health and Service Manager for Inclusion to inform future planning to inform decision making JS – Training on ALN Act for Health LMM/JS/LJ - Strategy for Inclusion developed	- Improvement planning for inclusion is based on sharing of key data across service areas and wider stakeholders - Health colleagues have a clearer understanding of ALN Act to support their work with schools

			• Strategy for inclusion in place
1.4 Senior leaders have a suitable vision for inclusion and pupils with ALN. However, this is not yet supported by a clear strategy.	**Inclusion and ALN**	See 1.3	See 1.3
1.5 However, this vision is not communicated clearly or consistently enough by the corporate leadership team. As a result, the strategic direction for education is not sufficiently understood by all elected members, officers, or staff in schools.	**Education vision**	See 1.2	See 1.2

R2 Improve the quality of self-evaluation, strategic planning and performance management			
Estyn Comments	**Theme**	**Actions**	**Success Criteria**
2.1 The corporate plan is not supported by coherent delivery plans for education that include related actions and measurable success criteria.	**Business Planning**	DMT - Revisit Business Plans, ensure actions relate to the vision, have clear timelines and measurable success criteria	The corporate plan is supported by Coherent business plans for education that include clear timelines, related actions and measurable success criteria
2.2 Overall, the quality of self-evaluation, planning for improvement, and performance management is not strong enough.	**Self-Evaluation Business Planning**	DMT - Self-evaluation joint working group half-termly DMT - Performance management – clear focus on accountability to Business Plan, and professional development opportunities JS – Training for Inclusion team on Fades	- Quality of self-evaluation is improved and uses relevant data effectively to enable informed improvement planning - Performance management is based on a performance coaching model, strong focus on accountability to business plan priorities and relevant professional development opportunities
2.3 The corporate priority and directorate vision for education are not coherently reflected in education plans.	**Business Planning**	See 2.1	See 2.1
2.4 The range of broad indicators in the corporate plan are not developed sufficiently into specific success criteria against relevant actions in education plans.	**Performance Indicators**	See 2.1	See 2.1
2.5 Disconnect between corporate and education plans tempers senior leaders' ability to hold officers to account for their work and	**Business Planning**	See 2.1 and 2.2	See 2.1 and 2.2

ensure an appropriate pace of improvement in identified areas.			
2.6 Plans do not always include suitable success criteria, and evaluations therefore focus too often on whether actions have been completed rather than the impact they have had on improving provision and outcomes for learners.	**Self-Evaluation Reporting Impact**	See 2.1	See 2.1
2.7 Senior managers have a better understanding of strengths and weaknesses in their services areas than is reflected in planning and self-evaluation documentation.	**Business planning Self-Evaluation**	See 2.1	See 2.1
2.8 Performance management targets are not consistently precise enough and do not always identify the specific aspects of practice that officers need to improve. As a result, performance management processes are not aligned consistently with evaluation and improvement work, and accountability does not always focus on the most important aspects of officers' work.	**Performance Indicators Targets**	See 2.2	See 2.2
2.9 Due to the weaknesses in evaluation across the directorate, members are not always provided with a clear enough picture of the strengths and areas for improvement across the directorate. This limits their ability to hold the local authority and the EAS to account for all aspects of their work.	**Self-Evaluation**	LP - Ensure developments in self-evaluation and business plans are clearly delivered to members through relevant reports/member briefings. LMM/MJ – Develop clearer processes for holding EAS to account for all aspects of their work. Information from these processes to be shared with members.	Members are provided with clear information on strengths and areas for improvement across the directorate. Members use the information to challenge and hold the education directorate and the EAS to account.

R3 Accelerate improvements in provision for secondary age pupils in schools causing concern			
Estyn Comments	**Theme**	**Actions**	**Success Criteria**
3.1 This work has greater impact for children in non-maintained and primary age settings than for young people in secondary age settings. Provision for young people was too slow to improve in two schools placed in statutory categories.	**Schools Causing Concern – pace of change**	LP - Re-issue of SWN to BFS, clear targets with measurable outcomes and time specific i.e. 2 terms	BFS are removed from a category
3.2 However, standards in the all-age school and the secondary school were judged to be adequate and unsatisfactory respectively, and both schools were placed in a statutory follow-up category. Although one of these schools has been removed from its category, both of these schools were slow to improve standards following their inspection.	**Schools Causing Concern – pace of change**	See 3.1	See 3.1
3.3 Two schools in the local authority require special measures currently, one secondary school and one special school, and one all-age school was removed from the category of needing significant improvement in February 2022. In two of these three schools, officers did not recognise important shortcomings or the need for school leaders to make significant improvements prior to these being identified by inspectors. The pace of improvement in these two schools has been too slow.	**Schools Causing Concern – early identification**	LP/LMM/MJ - Early identification through Professional Discussions, CSSR, Supported Self-evaluation, Wider group meetings, Partnership meetings, weekly directorate meetings with EAS Implementation of Team Around the School approach when issues identified	Important shortcomings in SCC schools are recognised early and appropriate support and challenge is put in place quickly. Clear monitoring systems of progress are put in place.

3.4 Progress in these schools show that issues identified at the time of the inspections, particularly around the quality of teaching, are not being addressed quickly enough and impact on learners' progress for too long a period of time.	**Schools Causing Concern – early identification**	See 3.3	See 3.3
3.5 Officers do not monitor progress closely enough or ensure that school improvement partners set sufficiently precise and focused success criteria against which progress can be measured.	**Schools Causing Concern – early identification**	LMM/MJ – Develop clearer processes for holding EAS to account for all aspects of their work. LMM/MJ – Work with EAS to review and remodel SIP working	Important shortcomings in schools are recognised early and appropriate support and challenge is put in place quickly. Clear monitoring systems of progress are put in place.
3.6 In a few cases, the progress that schools causing concern make is too slow and the local authority is not sufficiently challenging school leaders, the work of EAS or holding its own officers to account for the impact of actions in these schools.	**Schools Causing Concern – pace of change**	LP/LMM – Overview of Performance Management of HTs LMM/MJ – Develop clearer processes for holding EAS to account for all aspects of their work. DMT - Performance management of LA officers	Pace of change in all schools is timely.

Other			
Estyn Comments	**Theme**	**Actions**	**Success Criteria**
For the three years from 2017 to 2019, overall school attendance was consistently lower than the national average.	**Attendance**	DMT - Scrutiny of attendance data at DMT – identification of key themes, areas of good practice DMT - Performance management of relevant officers LA - Reinstate fines and CALICO, consistent approach JS/LA - Joint working with SEWC – sharing of good practice, implement strategies in schools JSi/LA - Joint termly meetings with secondary schools to discuss strategies to improve attendance etc.	School attendance is in line with or above national average. BG is in the second quartile or higher for attendance.
The rate of fixed-term school exclusions of five days or less was well above the national average, although the rate of fixed-term exclusions of more than five days was broadly in line with the national average.	**Exclusions**	DMT - Scrutiny of exclusions data at DMT – identification of key themes, areas of good practice LMM/JS – Introduction of additional nurture provision in schools with high levels of exclusions DMT - Performance management of relevant officers LA - Joint working with SEWC – sharing of good practice, implement strategies in schools JS – Vulnerable learner Panel to support reduction of pupils at risk of permanent exclusion. Review of managed move protocol. JSi/LA - Joint termly meetings with secondary schools to discuss strategies to improve attendance etc.	The rate of fixed term exclusions is line with or better that the national average. Fixed term exclusions continue to improve in line with the national average or better.
When given the opportunity, children and young people in the authority influence decisions that affect them.	**Pupil voice**	LMM/LF/ES - Continue to develop the work of Pupil Voice forums which impact on decision making e.g. Youth Forum. Ensure feedback from Pupil Voice Forums informs self-evaluation and improvement planning	Children and young people are provided with increased opportunities to influence decisions that affect them.
The local authority has recently developed new 'positive relationships and behaviour' guidance and a 'relationships (anti-bullying)' policy, although there was limited involvement of schools and learners in developing these.	**Inclusion**	LMM/JS/MJ - Inclusion Working Group to review all Inclusion Policies Inclusion Policies to be reshared with schools/governing bodies	Key stakeholders shape revised inclusion policies.

The local authority has improved its work in this area by purchasing a safeguarding information management system for every school that is being used to record and report incidents and related pupil demographics at school level and collate this information centrally. It is too early to evaluate how well the local authority and its schools are using this system.	**Safeguarding**	MJ - DMT progress report. Monthly officer meeting to progress My Concern matters. My Concern School / officer working group established. Project plan revised for next stages of implementation	My Concern is used by all schools to effectively record and report incidents, including safeguarding, bullying and RPIs. The LA uses My Concern reports to effectively monitor data, and to inform improvement planning.

The range of useful support services to promote positive relationships in schools and communities means that exclusions are low in many schools, although a few schools still have high exclusion rates.	**Safeguarding**	JS - Evaluate the impact of additional funding for schools with high exclusion rates to provide additional Nurture provision MJ/SD - Safeguarding Performance report to comment upon the impact that additional funding has upon school exclusion rates	The rate of fixed term exclusions is line with or better that the national average. Fixed term exclusions continue to improve in line with the national average or better.
Information and communication technology (ICT) in schools. However, the engagement of headteachers in this strategy was variable and the strategy is generally not well understood. In addition, despite many appropriate actions to improve connectivity and developments in relation to ICT, there is no clear ICT strategy.	**ICT**	JW - Bring together range of ICT initiatives into one clear strategy Ensure HT representation in relevant ICT meetings Feedback to HTs in Joint Headteacher meeting on ICT strategy MJ - The implementation of My Concern	Clear ICT strategy in place which is co-constructed with key stakeholders, including headteachers. ICT strategy is understood by all key stakeholders.
The local authority has established useful resource bases in several mainstream schools for pupils with additional learning needs. In some cases, these resource bases helped to address surplus places in the mainstream schools, but as the number of pupils in mainstream classes in these schools has increased, a few schools are now struggling for space.	**Transformation**	LMM./JW/JS - Review of resource bases JW - Review of school capacity	The LA has appropriate Resource Bases in place that meet the needs of BG learners, including in Welsh medium. School capacity issues are resolved.
However, the ongoing monitoring of these Resource Base provisions is inconsistent. There are very few references to these provisions in notes of visit from school improvement partners. Where they are referenced, comments made are too limited to be of any value to the local authority and rarely evaluate the impact of provision on pupils' progress.	**Inclusion and school improvement**	JS/MJ - EAS to undertake review of Resource Base provision through SIP work Autumn 2022. Supported Self-evaluation activities undertaken by the EAS in schools with resource bases to be undertaken by Inclusion LA officer and SIP JS – review entry and exit criteria for Resource Bases	Review of resource bases completed and used to effectively inform improvement planning. Revised entrance and exit criteria for Resource Bases in school.

The local authority does not analyse its use of out-of-county settings well enough to understand the implications for its capacity to meet the needs of pupils locally.	**Inclusion and ALN**	JS - Analysis of out of county settings undertaken, spreadsheet created where all relevant data can be analysed.	Analysis of out of county placements enables clear planning for placements, and reduces potential risks linked to finance.
However, the local authority does not have a strategic enough approach to planning or evaluating the impact of professional learning across the directorate.	**Professional Learning**	DMT - Professional Learning a core part of Professional Coaching meetings. Professional Learning opportunities link to Business planning and or LA officer's portfolio	The LA plans and evaluates the impact of professional learning across the directorate effectively.