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Her Majesty's Inspectorate  
for Education and Training in Wales



WALES AUDIT OFFICE  
SWYDDFA ARCHWILIO CYMRU

# **Quality and standards in education and training in Wales**

**A report on the quality of**

**Wrexham  
Local Education Authority**

**October 2007**

**by**

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

**The purpose of Estyn is to inspect quality and standards in education and training in Wales. Estyn is responsible for inspecting:**

- ▲ nursery schools and settings that are maintained by, or receive funding from, local education authorities (LEAs);
- ▲ primary schools;
- ▲ secondary schools;
- ▲ special schools;
- ▲ pupil referral units;
- ▲ independent schools;
- ▲ further education;
- ▲ adult community-based learning;
- ▲ youth support services;
- ▲ youth and community work training;
- ▲ LEAs;
- ▲ teacher education and training;
- ▲ work-based learning;
- ▲ careers companies;
- ▲ offender learning; and
- ▲ the education, guidance and training elements of the Department for Work and Pensions funded training programme.

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- ▲ provides advice on quality and standards in education and training in Wales to the National Assembly for Wales and others; and
- ▲ makes public good practice based on inspection evidence.

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## Context

### The inspection

- 1 In April 2006, a six year (April 2006 to March 2012) cycle of Local Education Authority service inspections, under section 38 of the Education Act 1997 and the Children Act 2004, began. The inspection framework for this cycle is on the Estyn website [www.estyn.co.uk](http://www.estyn.co.uk).
- 2 This inspection took place from 1 October 2007 to 12 October 2007. The focus of this inspection is on all of Wrexham County Borough Council's education services. Before the inspection, the Children and Young People Service undertook a review of the services it provides and produced a self evaluation report as part of its own review process.

### Key judgements

- 3 The inspection team makes two key judgements about each service. These are:

#### **(1) How good is the local authority's performance?**

- 4 The local authority's performance in discharging its responsibilities is rated on a four-point scale as follows:

- |         |  |
|---------|--|
| Grade 1 | good with outstanding features (***)             |
| Grade 2 | good features and no important shortcomings (**) |
| Grade 3 | good features outweigh shortcomings (*)          |
| Grade 4 | shortcomings in important areas                  |

#### **(2) Will the local authority's performance improve?**

- 5 The prospects of improvement are rated on a four-point scale as follows:

- |         |  |
|---------|--|
| Grade 1 | improvement prospects are good, with significant improvements already in place |
| Grade 2 | improvement prospects are good, with no major barriers                         |
| Grade 3 | some good prospects, but barriers in important areas                           |
| Grade 4 | many important barriers to improvement   |

## **Key questions**

- 6 In order to make the two key judgements, inspectors evaluate the authority's performance in relation to each of four key questions:
- How effective is the authority's strategic planning?
  - How effective are the authority's services?
  - How effective are leadership and management?
  - How well do leaders and managers monitor, evaluate and improve services?
- 7 These four key questions and the evaluations are set out in the findings section. They are recorded as grades, using the four-point scales set out at (1) and (2) above. All of the grades are included in the grading profile.

## Background to the authority

- 8 Wrexham county borough is situated in north-east Wales on the border with England. It comprises the town of Wrexham, the largest in North Wales, a number of small towns and villages, most of which have an industrial background, and several rural villages.
- 9 The town of Wrexham is becoming increasingly prosperous. Unemployment levels in the county borough are well below the Welsh average. Nearly 80% of the working age population is economically active, compared with 75% of the Welsh population. The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation<sup>1</sup> (2005) ranks specific small areas in Wales in terms of deprivation. A smaller than average proportion of Wrexham's areas fall in the 10% most deprived areas in Wales, and the majority of Wrexham's areas are less deprived than the Wales average.
- 10 The overall population of Wrexham has increased over recent years and is now 131,000. In terms of population, Wrexham is the eleventh largest authority in Wales. About 14% of the population speaks Welsh. The communities with the most Welsh speakers are in the west of the county borough and in the urban area of Rhosllannerchrugog.
- 11 The area has become increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse in the last 10 years with a very high number of people coming from the European Union, mainly from Poland and Portugal, and from the Philippines to live and work in Wrexham. The number of migrant workers from Europe in the county borough is one of the highest of all local authorities in Wales.<sup>2</sup>

### Political governance

- 12 The council consists of 52 elected members. The majority of councillors are members of political groups and the political composition of the council is:
  - Labour – 19 members;
  - Liberal Democrat/Independent Alliance – 14 members;
  - Independents – four members;
  - Conservative – four members;
  - Non-aligned – six members; and
  - West Wrexham Independents – four members.
- 13 A politically-balanced executive board, comprising 10 members including the leader of the council, provides leadership and a policy framework for the council. The

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<sup>1</sup> The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation measures the overall level of deprivation in local authorities in Wales. The Index covers seven aspects of deprivation: income, employment, health, education, housing, physical environment and access to services.

<sup>2</sup> Source: Office for National Statistics, Statistical Article, Statistics on migrant workers in Wales, 2007

leader is a Liberal Democrat and leads a coalition administration. Seven of the 10 members of the executive have lead responsibilities. Two of these members have lead and deputy lead responsibilities for the Children and Young People Service. There are five scrutiny committees including the scrutiny committee for children and young people.

### **Corporate structure**

- 14 In 2004, the chief executive led a programme of cultural and structural change called 'Ymlaen: Making Change Deliver'. In April 2004, a new senior management team was formed, comprising the chief executive and four strategic directors. Strategic directors are responsible for developing the council's key strategies and themes. Twelve chief officers are responsible for the delivery of the council's services.
- 15 The authority carried out a full review of all its services to children and young people, including those in education and children's social services, during 2004-2005. This involved extensive research into best practice in Wales, England and beyond, and a full and wide-ranging consultation with all potential stakeholders and interested parties. The outcome of this work was the creation of an integrated Children and Young People Service in Wrexham and the bringing together of priorities for children and young people over the next 10 years to deliver the entitlement agenda that is summarised in a document called 'The Wrexham Promise'. Elected members and the chief executive have given their full support to these changes.
- 16 Wrexham's Children and Young People Service comprises three departments, each with its own chief officer who is responsible for service delivery. The three chief officers work together and their work is strategically co-ordinated by the strategic director and the lead and deputy lead members for children and young people. The departments are:
  - learning and achievement;
  - prevention and inclusion; and
  - safeguarding and support.
- 17 The chief officer for learning and achievement is the statutory chief education officer.
- 18 These three departments have been fully functioning since April 2006 and carry responsibility for all aspects of the authority's education and children's social services. They bring together areas and aspects, such as the youth offending service, family centres and integrated children's centres that were formerly located within different organisational structures.
- 19 The Children and Young People Service is responsible for provision of school places, admissions to schools and health and safety. It has responsibility for asset management planning with support from the transport and asset management service. The transport and asset management service is responsible for home-to-school transport.

## Schools and pupils

- 20 In Wrexham county borough, there are two nursery schools, 66 primary schools, nine secondary schools, one special school and four pupil referral units (PRUs). Three of the nine secondary schools provide education for pupils aged 11-18. The other six secondary schools provide education for pupils aged 11-16. Pupils from these schools who wish to continue in full-time education usually transfer to Yale College. Pupils learn through the medium of Welsh in seven primary schools and in one secondary school.
- 21 In January 2007, the number of pupils on school rolls was 19,079. The number of pupils in primary schools has fallen by 4.3% since 2002 and risen in secondary schools by 0.3% in the same period.
- 22 The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is 13.5%, a figure that is below the average of 16% for Wales as a whole. Wrexham has the ninth lowest free school meal entitlement in Wales.
- 23 Since September 2006, the number of children of migrant workers in Wrexham schools has increased from 221 to 379. The total number of children from ethnic minorities has increased from 453 to 748 in the same period.

## Funding

- 24 The Welsh Assembly Government's 2007-2008 standard spending assessment (SSA<sup>3</sup>) per head of population for Wrexham County Borough Council is the second lowest for local authorities in Wales. Within this, the education component, which is termed the education indicator-based assessment (IBA<sup>4</sup>), amounts to £80.3 million. This represents an average of £4,406 for each pupil, which is the eleventh highest level of IBA per pupil in Wales. The level of the education IBA reflects the indicators that contribute to the formula for allocating funding, including deprivation and sparsely distributed population.
- 25 Wrexham County Borough Council has set overall budgets for managing and delivering its services close to its SSA in 2007-2008. The Council has also set its net<sup>5</sup> education budget similar to its education IBA.

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<sup>3</sup> SSA is the means by which the Welsh Assembly Government distributes Revenue Support Grant to local authorities.

<sup>4</sup> Education IBA is that part of SSA relating to the delivery of education services. Education IBA is not intended as a spending output and councils are free to spend at levels above or below IBA, in accordance with their priorities.

<sup>5</sup> The net education budget excludes income from specific grants.

## Summary

### Grade profile

	How good is the local authority's performance?	Will the local authority's performance improve?
Strategic management	2	2
Support for school improvement	2	2
Promoting social inclusion and well-being	2	2
Additional learning needs (ALN)	2	1
Access and school organisation	3	3
Support services	3	3

### Strategic management

- 26 The authority has effective strategies to improve school performance, the quality of learning and the achievements of all children and young people, particularly vulnerable groups. Elected members have taken a strong lead in the strategy to raise standards in secondary schools and in the review of primary school organisation. Senior officers provide good leadership of departments in the Children and Young People Service. However, the lack of clarity in the line management and accountability for the chief officers of the service has the potential to hamper progress in planning and decision making.
- 27 Over the last two years, the way the council carries out its strategic planning at a corporate level has improved because officers and members have a clearer understanding of priorities. The Single Education Plan provides effective strategic direction. Elected members understand their strategic role and ensure that plans are put into action. However, operational plans in the Children and Young People Service vary in quality and consistency. Most do not include targets or costs so it is difficult for the council to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of some aspects of the service.
- 28 By means of effective consultation, the authority has engaged stakeholders' commitment to its strategies and priorities for improvement. There has been a very significant improvement since 2005 in the way that the council has made decision-making and the budget transparent. As a result, schools now have trust and confidence in the service.
- 29 Partnership work provides a good basis for the development of the Children and Young People Plan that will be required in 2008. Multi-agency partnerships are beginning to agree priorities and to improve provision for learners but objectives are not always specific enough.
- 30 There have been significant improvements in the council's performance monitoring in the last two years. Senior officers and elected members systematically monitor

performance in key priorities against quantitative indicators. As a result, they have a clear understanding of where targets have been achieved and prioritise work where targets have not been met. The quality of the performance management process is better at senior officer level than at service team level. The authority has recently set up a Performance, Support and Development section to improve performance management within the Children and Young People Service.

### **Support for school improvement**

- 31 School improvement is a high priority for the council. School improvement officers have a very good understanding of performance in Wrexham schools. They use data well to set challenging targets with schools and to identify priorities for improvement. Officers have built a culture of challenge and support that almost all headteachers have accepted. School improvement programmes have had an impact on raising standards in schools.
- 32 The authority has a system to target support where it is most needed. However, the criteria to allocate support and the amount of support to which schools are entitled are not transparent. In practice, school improvement officers try to provide as much support as possible to all schools. As a result, some schools are too dependent on improvement officers and do not take enough responsibility for making improvements themselves.
- 33 Officers respond quickly to underperformance in primary schools. Senior officers meet with the headteacher and governors of all secondary schools to review performance rigorously and agree priorities for improvement. In a few secondary schools, improvement is not sustained following the support given by the authority.
- 34 There are suitable, well-qualified personnel to provide support in most curriculum areas and particularly so in the core subjects of the national curriculum and religious education. The quality of curriculum support is generally good and some of it is very good. It has had a measurable impact on raising standards in individual schools and departments.
- 35 There is currently insufficient support to help schools raise pupils' standards in information and communications technology (ICT).
- 36 There is a good range of in-service training courses for senior managers, aspiring leaders and teachers. The quality of training for governors is good but training is not well attended. To address this poor attendance, the authority has introduced whole governing body training to make training more attractive and relevant to governors' needs.

### **Promoting social inclusion and well-being**

- 37 Elected members undertake their responsibilities as corporate parents very effectively. They ensure that children looked after by the authority receive their full entitlement to education, achieve good standards and are able to go on to further study, work or training when they leave school.

- 38 The authority is responding appropriately to the significant increase in demand for the English as an additional language (EAL) service. This service provides mainstream teachers with well-planned advice and training which is helping to improve the capacity of schools to meet the needs of a rapidly increasing number of pupils with EAL. Individual pupils receive good quality specialist teaching and support and, as a result, they make good progress.
- 39 The authority meets the needs of pupils from minority ethnic groups, refugee families and the Gypsy Traveller community very effectively.
- 40 Officers are taking appropriate action, including targeting some successful initiatives, to reduce exclusion rates. The rate of permanent exclusions has reduced since 2004 and is now well below the average for Wales. Although fixed term exclusions are reducing in number, they are well above the Wales average and are too high.
- 41 Despite clear improvements to the structure and work of the pupil referral units (PRUs), particularly at key stage 3, the authority has not made sufficient progress in implementing all the recommendations for key stage 4 pupils since Estyn's last inspections. However, the number of pupils achieving a GCSE qualification is increasing. Uncertainty about lines of responsibility in the management of the PRUs is hampering the rate of improvement in service provision.
- 42 The Education Social Work Service provides very good support to help schools improve pupils' attendance. From 2005 to 2006, attendance in secondary schools improved by almost one percentage point.

#### **Additional learning needs (ALN)**

- 43 Specialist teams within the Children and Young People Service provide good support for individual children, their families and their schools. These teams work closely with each other, and with key external agencies, to raise standards and promote the successful inclusion of pupils with hearing, vision, medical, communication, learning and behavioural needs.
- 44 There are good arrangements for identifying and assessing the needs of pre-school children and for providing early support in partnership with local child health services.
- 45 The proportion of pupils with statements, at 4.37%, is well above the Welsh average of 3.15%, and is the third highest in Wales. The authority educates a relatively high proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs (SEN) in special classes or units in mainstream schools, and a correspondingly low proportion in ordinary classes in mainstream schools. Officers are working effectively with mainstream schools to build their capacity to identify and meet pupils' additional learning needs. This work is at a more advanced stage in secondary schools than in primary schools.
- 46 Following a thorough review in 2005, the authority increased overall funding for SEN and revised the formula for funding SEN through schools' delegated budgets in a way that removes the incentive for schools to seek statements of SEN. The new formula was introduced in primary schools in April 2006, and there are firm plans for

an equivalent system in secondary schools in April 2008. At the same time, the authority plans to introduce a tighter system for monitoring the use of all delegated SEN funding.

- 47 There are several very good initiatives aimed at promoting the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) in mainstream schools, including dyslexia-friendly and autism-friendly schooling, the Accelerating Achievement<sup>6</sup> programme and the recent provision of specialist advisory support for schools to help them to address pupils' speech, language and communication difficulties.
- 48 Although communication with parents and carers is generally good, information for service users has not kept pace with the progress in developing new services. As a result, parents and carers do not always know how to access the most appropriate services for their children.

### **Access and school organisation**

- 49 The council has taken important steps to reorganise primary education to improve the learning environment and the quality of education. A programme of infant and junior school amalgamations, together with the recalculation of unfilled places in primary schools, should see spare capacity reduce to around 10.5% in 2009. The planned remodelling of three secondary schools will lead to a reduction in unfilled places in the secondary phase.
- 50 There has been significant capital investment in education since 1996 of about £70 million, of which £48 million has been raised by the council and the remainder from the Welsh Assembly Government. Even so, the condition of many of the council's school buildings is unsatisfactory and there is an estimated maintenance backlog of £27million.
- 51 Since the last inspection, there has been little progress on completing a database on the condition, suitability and sufficiency of schools. The information on the condition of buildings is out of date and therefore provides an inadequate basis for prioritising building projects and reorganisation proposals.
- 52 The authority has clear, effective procedures for admissions. Almost all parents receive a place for their child that meets their first preference. All parents wishing to access Welsh-medium education can do so but there are not enough places to meet parents' first preference.
- 53 The council manages the provision of home-to-school transport effectively but inconsistencies in the concessionary transport policy are currently not being tackled. This is an important shortcoming.

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<sup>6</sup> The Accelerating Achievement programme is an inclusion initiative that aims to help schools improve outcomes for all learners.

## **Support services**

- 54 There are good features in the work of all support services. Overall, schools are satisfied with the support services they receive from the authority, though primary schools are more satisfied than secondary schools. In particular, schools receive good support for managing their budgets and they rate the ICT technical support service very highly.
- 55 The current service level agreements (SLAs) for support services do not provide schools with a good basis to enable them to exercise choice, or to monitor the value, of the services they receive. Most of the SLAs are unclear about the level of service that schools will receive, and about the respective responsibilities of the authority and schools. They are not flexible enough for schools to change their service provision to take account of changing needs and circumstances.
- 56 There are good prospects in the authority's work on support services. New SLAs, which are to be introduced in April 2008, are likely to address many of the current weaknesses. They provide a clear definition of service standards and set out the respective responsibilities of the authority and schools. However, schools have limited experience of being effective purchasers and are currently over dependent on the authority. The new draft SLAs do not provide schools with enough choice, and in some cases impose unnecessary restrictions.
- 57 With some exceptions, for example, catering and cleaning services, the authority does not consistently compare service costs and quality with services in other authorities, nor regularly seek user feedback. As a result, neither the authority nor schools can be certain whether all support services are delivering value for money.

## Recommendations

- 58 In order to secure the improvements that are needed, the local authority should:
- R1 make sure that senior offices have clear and well understood responsibilities and lines of accountability;
- R2 improve performance management arrangements within the Children and Young People Service to ensure:
- clearer objectives and targets in operational plans; and
  - effective systems to monitor and evaluate the impact of service teams on outcomes and their cost effectiveness;
- R3 refine and make transparent the criteria for school support and intervention in order to:
- clarify schools' entitlement to local authority resources for school improvement;
  - target local authority resources in inverse proportion to the success of a school; and
  - ensure sustained support for secondary schools with serious weaknesses;
- R4 improve further the provision for specific groups of learners by:
- increasing the capacity of mainstream primary schools to identify pupils' additional learning needs at an early stage;
  - improving the procedures, at an early stage, for identifying and responding to the needs of learners who are at risk of exclusion; and
  - ensuring that recommendations from the last inspections of the pupil referral units (PRUs) are met consistently in all the PRUs;
- R5 produce a long term strategy that will:
- improve the quality of school buildings;
  - further reduce spare places in schools; and
  - meet the demand for Welsh-medium education; and
- R6 address the inconsistencies in the concessionary transport policy.

## Findings

### How good is the LEA's performance?

#### Strategic management

#### Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

#### Leadership and strategic management

- 59 Elected members provide very strong leadership. They are firmly committed to improving school performance, the quality of learning experiences and the achievements of all children and young people, particularly vulnerable groups.

#### The work of elected members

Two years ago, elected members formally recognised the underperformance of secondary schools in Wrexham and, as a result, the council made school improvement its top priority. Members have taken a strong lead in their support of the strategy to raise standards in secondary schools and in the review of primary school organisation. They understand their strategic role and ensure that plans are put into action.

Members have protected the schools' budget from cuts as far as possible and provided additional resources for improving the curriculum to raise standards at key stage 4 and for the strategic priorities of additional learning needs, inclusion and for pupils with English as an additional language. These decisions have improved standards and the quality of provision. Members hold officers and schools accountable for the use of these resources to make improvements and they monitor performance closely at local authority and individual school level.

The challenge provided by the scrutiny committee is sharp and focused. For example, the scrutiny committee has met the headteacher and chair of governors of each secondary school. Following presentations from headteachers on the strengths and challenges in their schools, elected members asked searching questions about each school's plans and targets for improvement. They challenge officers and schools where improvements are slower than expected and hold them both accountable for the effective use of resources to make improvements.

- 60 Senior officers carry out their individual responsibilities well. At both corporate and service level, they focus on national and local priorities and work closely with each other and with elected members.
- 61 The new management structure of the Children and Young People Service is improving the coordination of support for different groups of learners, for example, looked-after children and learners with additional learning needs. Within and across the three departments, teams are beginning to work together to deliver services that focus strongly on raising achievement and 'The Wrexham Promise'.

- 62 The Audit Commission school survey<sup>7</sup> for 2007 indicates that Wrexham is among the highest performing 25% of local authorities in England and Wales for the effectiveness of the leadership provided by its elected members and senior officers. Headteachers perceive a significant culture change in the last two years. The authority now has clear vision, transparency and strategies for improvement that have the support of stakeholders.

### **Strategic planning**

- 63 The council's community strategy for 2004-2020 has clear aims to make Wrexham 'a place that values learning' and 'a place where children and young people are valued'.
- 64 Over the last two years, the way the council carries out its strategic planning has improved. There are coherent links between the council's community strategy, improvement plan and single education plan. The council's improvement plan identifies targets for specific objectives. In addition to a three-year plan, the council now has medium-term agenda to focus each year on a small number of corporate priorities that need immediate attention.
- 65 The single education plan is appropriately linked to the corporate vision and to the priorities of the Children and Young People Service. It is a succinct, evaluative document that is based on first-hand evidence of where improvement is most needed. The strategic priorities are, appropriately, raising educational achievement, improving inclusion and participation, improving access to education and improving the co-ordination of services to children and young people. For each priority, there is an appropriate range of actions to address school improvement and inclusion issues.
- 66 There is a separate service management plan for each department in the Children and Young People Service. These plans link well with the council's improvement plan but they do not include joint planning across the departments in respect of common service priorities identified in the single education plan.
- 67 Strategies and plans at corporate, service and departmental level clearly reflect the council's key priorities of raising standards and promoting the inclusion of all learners. The strategic management and operational planning of services for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) are coherent and effective. However the operational plans for other services vary in quality and consistency. Many focus too much on processes and not enough on outcomes. The majority do not include specific objectives, are not fully costed and do not include targets or indicators. As a result, it is difficult for the council to measure the impact of some services or their value for money.

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<sup>7</sup> The School Survey Analysis Report for Wrexham 2007 – conducted by the Audit Commission on behalf of the Wales Audit Office in the summer term 2007. Forty-two Wrexham schools responded, including eight secondary schools, two pupil referral units and both nursery schools. The overall response rate of 49% was below Wrexham's response rate to a similar survey in 2004 (64%) but above the England & Wales average in 2007 (36%). Further information can be found at: [www.audit-commission.gov.uk/schoolsurvey](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/schoolsurvey).

- 68 The council has planned for the production of the Children and Young People Plan through the Children and Young People's Framework Partnership, linking it with 'The Wrexham Promise' document. The role of the strategic director of the Children and Young People Service has provided valuable capacity to achieve purposeful relationships with partners. This work and the Children and Young People Service structure provide a firm baseline to produce the Children and Young People Plan but at the time of the inspection there was limited capacity to produce the plan at an operational level.

### **Consultation and communication**

- 69 There are very effective systems for consultation with schools and partners, including a programme of regular meetings with headteachers, consortia groups, steering groups, task and finish groups and special education needs co-ordinators. As a result, members and officers have engaged stakeholders' commitment to the authority's improvement strategies. In addition, officers and members visit schools frequently for different purposes. They consult with learners regularly through the well-established youth forum but do not consult learners enough when they evaluate and plan service improvements.
- 70 Relationships with schools are good. There has been a very significant improvement since 2005 in the way that the authority has made its decision-making and the budget transparent. Although changes in the structure of services are fairly recent, users have trust and confidence in the Children and Young People Service.
- 71 Although, the authority is in the highest performing 25% of local authorities in England and Wales in the Audit Commission school survey for its quality of communication with schools, service users are not aware of the full range of current services and how to access them.

### **Partnerships**

- 72 The Children and Young People Service has effectively aligned many of its priorities with the priorities of the Wrexham Children's and Young People's Framework Partnership (CYPFWP). As a result, the service has made a good contribution to the wider corporate objectives of the council including those in the community strategy and community safety plan.
- 73 Multi-agency partnerships are beginning to agree joint priorities for children and young people to make better provision appropriate to their needs. For example, the 'Team Around the Child' (TAC) initiative provides earlier intervention and well co-ordinated support for children and families from a range of agencies.
- 74 Some specific groups of children and young people are targeted well by partnerships to enable them to continue to learn and achieve. For example, the 14-19 Network provides good personal support for learners at risk of disengaging from mainstream education or training at key stage 4.

- 75 Early years advisory staff work effectively with partners through the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership, particularly through the Flying Start<sup>8</sup> initiative to improve outcomes for 0-3 year olds in Communities First<sup>9</sup> areas.
- 76 The 14-19 Network is increasingly focusing on continuity and improved outcomes for learners. There are good relationships between partners and a long established partnership with Yale College. Activity to improve learning pathways for learners from the ages of 14-19 has accelerated this year. Nine out of the 10 secondary/special schools are sharing a common timetable of a range of different options for one afternoon a week at key stage 4 in addition to a number of individual courses that are jointly provided on a smaller scale. The aim is to extend this in 2008-2009. The Welsh Assembly Government has approved the current 14-19 Network Development Plan.
- 77 The new structure of the Children and Young People Service is improving joint working across its three departments. For example, the youth service and learning and achievement department have developed effective programmes that are successfully helping young people to remain and succeed in mainstream education. The youth offending service has had an impact in reducing anti-social behaviour through projects set up for this purpose.
- 78 There is effective partnership working and good communication within the service that is improving the effectiveness of safeguarding work, with a good focus on intervening earlier with vulnerable families. In particular, the close relationships between teams for prevention and Inclusion, and for safeguarding and support have the potential to reduce the need for higher levels of intervention.
- 79 Despite these examples of effective partnership working in the Children and Young People Service structure, co-ordination of work within and across the three service departments is not yet fully developed in a way that harnesses the expertise in departments to its full potential. For example, specialist teachers and educational psychologists provide special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCOs) with good training and support, but there are not enough training opportunities for mainstream class teachers to help them to improve their understanding of the needs of pupils with SEN. The three departments are not yet working in a fully integrated way.
- 80 There is an increasing focus on improving service delivery through partnerships but, overall, the service does not give enough attention to the desired impact of services on outcomes for learners. The partnership with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and the 'Unlocking the potential' project that helps mainstream secondary schools to improve standards of achievement of less able pupils and those whose behaviour places them at risk of exclusion are exceptionally good in this respect because they have very clear objectives. Both these partnerships are helping learners to achieve more.

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<sup>8</sup> Flying Start is the name given to services that deliver free, part-time childcare for two year olds to help them prepare for school. They also provide increased levels of support from health visitors and parenting programmes to give young children the best possible start in life.

<sup>9</sup> The Communities First programme is a Welsh Assembly Government strategy to improve the living conditions and prospects for people living in disadvantaged areas.

## **Performance management, monitoring, self-evaluation and planning for improvement**

- 81 There have been significant improvements in the authority's performance monitoring arrangements in the last two years. Senior officers and elected members regularly and systematically monitor performance in key priorities against indicators set out in the improvement plan and service management plans. As a result, they have a clear understanding of where targets have been achieved and prioritise work where targets have not been met.
- 82 Budget management is given an appropriately high profile within the service. Monthly budget monitoring reports are presented to all account managers and are discussed with them by a member of the Children and Young People finance team. Information on significant variances is passed up through the council, with higher level information going to the executive board and individual members on a monthly basis.
- 83 The council introduced service management plans for all services in 2006 but within the Children and Young People service these plans vary in quality. Overall, operational plans within the Children and Young People Service do not contain enough information on objectives. Most do not include targets or costs so it is difficult for the council to measure the impact and efficiency of some aspects of the service.
- 84 Since the last inspection of SEN in 2004, arrangements for monitoring the impact of services for pupils with additional learning needs have improved. Service teams track the progress of pupils with SEN and EAL, and use the data to review pupils' teaching and support arrangements. On some occasions, learning and teaching advisers use information about outcomes for specific groups of pupils as part of their work to challenge schools to raise standards. However, there is a lack of rigour and consistency in this aspect of their work.
- 85 The monitoring of the delivery of support services is not consistent. Those services, such as information and communications technology (ICT) support, that have clearly defined service standards are better than others at monitoring their delivery. For many support services there is no transparent system of monitoring. In the absence of clear service standards against which the service can be monitored, it is difficult for the council or schools to assess whether support services are of an appropriate quality or whether they deliver value for money.
- 86 There is not a culture of benchmarking the performance of services with similar services in other local authorities.
- 87 The quality of the performance management process is improving at senior officer level, following clear council guidance, but the performance review and development process within the service is not robust enough because there is insufficient focus on performance objectives or outcomes in individual performance reviews.
- 88 In the last two years, chief officers and departments have put a lot of work into developing services that meet the needs of users better. The very comprehensive

self-evaluation that the Children and Young People Service carried out prior to the inspection shows a good understanding of their strengths and priorities for improvement. However, operational work has taken priority over systematic evaluation and planning for further improvement. Senior officers have recognised this shortcoming and have recently set up a performance, support and development section within the Children and Young People Service with a focus on improving performance management.

**Support for school improvement**  
**Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

**Performance of schools**

- 89 There is a trend of improving performance in national curriculum assessments and external examinations in primary and secondary schools.
- 90 At key stages 1 and 2, primary schools in Wrexham perform at a level that is consistently well above the average for Wales. At key stage 3, the performance of secondary schools was below the average for Wales in 2006 and is above the average in 2007.
- 91 The following tables compare the percentage of pupils in Wrexham schools that attained the core subject indicator<sup>10</sup> (CSI) in National Curriculum teacher assessments in key stages 1, 2 and 3 in the last three years with that of pupils throughout Wales.<sup>11</sup>

Key stage 1	2005	2006	2007
Wrexham	83.0%	83.9%	83.9%
Wales	80.9%	80.6%	80.1%
Rank <sup>12</sup>	5	4	4

Key stage 2	2005	2006	2007
Wrexham	75.5%	76.9%	78.1%
Wales	74.3%	74.2%	74.1%
Rank	5	5	3

Key stage 3	2005	2006	2007
Wrexham	57.3%	56.5%	57.5%
Wales	57.4%	58.2 %	56.7%
Rank	12	16	11

- 92 The percentage of pupils attaining five or more A\*-C grades at GCSE increased by 8.5 percentage points between 2005 and 2007. However, it is still below the Wales

<sup>10</sup> The Core Subject Indicator represents the percentage of pupils achieving the expected level or above in English or Welsh (first language), mathematics and science in combination.

<sup>11</sup> Sources: National Statistics: SDR 102/2005(R), National Curriculum Assessments of 7,11 and 14 year olds, Local Education Authorities in Wales, 2005; SDR 130/2006, National Curriculum Assessments of 7,11 and 14 year olds: Wales, 2006, SDR 145/2007, National Curriculum Assessments of 7,11 and 14 year olds: Wales, 2007

<sup>12</sup> When performance is compared to all the 22 authorities across Wales

average. The percentage of pupils attaining five or more A\*-G grades has increased by 4.7 percentage over three years and is now above the Wales average.

- 93 The following tables compare the performance of pupils in Wrexham schools with that of pupils throughout Wales in GCSE and GNVQ examinations.<sup>13</sup>

<b>Percentage of pupils who gained 5 or more GCSEs grade A*-C or vocational equivalent</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>
<b>Wrexham</b>	42.4%	49.7%	50.9%
<b>Wales</b>	52.2%	53.8%	54.2%
<b>Rank</b>	20	16	15

<b>Percentage of pupils who gained 5 or more GCSEs grade A*-G or vocational equivalent</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>
<b>Wrexham</b>	82.9%	86.9%	87.6%
<b>Wales</b>	85.2%	86%	85.7%
<b>Rank</b>	16	9	8

- 94 Some schools are also improving their performance in comparison with the performance of similar schools in other authorities in Wales. Overall, there is a trend of improving performance but primary schools are improving their performance relative to similar schools faster than secondary schools.
- 95 The tables below show the distribution of Wrexham schools within the top and bottom all-Wales Free School Meals Benchmark Quartiles for the Core Subject Indicator at each key stage.

#### Key stage 1

<b>Percentage of schools in</b>	<b>2004 (58 schools)</b>	<b>2005 (58 schools)</b>	<b>2006 (59 schools)</b>
Highest quartile	17%	28%	32%
Lowest quartile	21%	22%	12%

#### Key stage 2

<b>Percentage of schools in</b>	<b>2004 (59 schools)</b>	<b>2005 (58 schools)</b>	<b>2006 (59 schools)</b>
Highest quartile	14%	17%	24%
Lowest quartile	25%	29%	27%

#### Key stage 3

<b>Percentage of schools in</b>	<b>2004 (9 schools)</b>	<b>2005 (9 schools)</b>	<b>2006 (9 schools)</b>
Highest quartile	11%	22%	22%
Lowest quartile	33%	33%	11%

<sup>13</sup> Sources: SDR 118/2005, GCSE/GNVQ and GCE A, AS and AVCE results in Wales, 2005; SDR 164/2006, GCSE/GNVQ and GCE A, AS and AVCE results in Wales, 2006; SDR 184/2007 GCSE/GNVQ and GCE A, AS, AVCE results in Wales, 2007

## Key stage 4

Percentage of schools in	2004 (9 schools)	2005 (9 schools)	2006 (9 schools)
Highest quartile	11%	11%	22%
Lowest quartile	44%	44%	22%

- 96 The National Assembly for Wales sets benchmarks for performance based on entitlement to free school meals:
- for the percentage attaining the CSI at key stage 3;
  - for the percentage of pupils who gain five or more A\*-C grades at GCSE; and
  - for the average points score per pupil at GCSE.
- 97 In 2006, Wrexham's performance was below the expected benchmarks. The gap between results and expected benchmarks widened between 2005 and 2006 at key stage 3 but narrowed at GCSE.

### Support, monitoring, challenge and intervention

- 98 Officers have a very good understanding of performance in Wrexham schools. School improvement officers carry out thorough analyses of performance within and across schools. This provides the authority and schools with very good evidence to plan for improvement.
- 99 Officers have built a culture of challenge within the schools that is accepted by almost all headteachers. The strategy for raising secondary achievement, put into place in 2005 has made a significant contribution to raising standards at key stage 4.
- 100 Overall, school improvement officers provide support that improves the quality of education, particularly in the primary phase. The following table shows the inspection grades for schools inspected in Wrexham over the period 2005-2007.

Inspection of Wrexham Local Education Authority  
October 2007

Provider type	Provider	KQ1	KQ2	KQ3	KQ4	KQ5	KQ6	KQ7
Nursery and Primary	All Saints Primary School	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Pupil Referral Unit	Cyfle Young Mothers' Unit	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Nursery and Primary	Bronington VA Primary School	1	1	1	1	1	2	1
Nursery and Primary	Alexandra School	2	2	2	1	1	1	1
Nursery and Primary	St Peters CIW Primary School	2	2	1	1	1	2	1
Nursery and Primary	Rhosddu Primary School	2	1	2	1	2	2	1
Pupil Referral Unit	Gwersyllt Support Centre	2	1	2	1	1	1	3
Nursery and Primary	Eyton CIW Primary School	2	2	2	1	2	2	1
Primary	Hafod y Wern Junior School	2	2	1	1	2	2	2
Primary	Rhosymedre Junior School	3	2	2	1	1	2	1
Nursery and Primary	St Mary's RC Primary School	2	2	1	1	2	2	2
Nursery and Primary	Penycae Infants School	2	2	2	2	2	1	2
Nursery and Primary	Ysgol Maes y Llan	2	2	2	2	2	1	2
Nursery and Primary	Ysgol y Wern	2	2	2	1	2	2	2
Nursery and Primary	Brynteg County School	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Nursery and Primary	Pentre CIW Primary School	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Nursery and Primary	Rhostyllen Primary School	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Nursery and Primary	St Anne's RC Primary	3	2	1	1	2	3	2
Nursery and Primary	Ysgol Bryn Tabor	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Secondary	Ysgol Bryn Alyn	2	2	3	1	2	2	2
Nursery and Primary	Ysgol Penrhyn New Broughton Primary	2	2	2	2	3	4	1
Nursery and Primary	Hafod y Wern Infants School	3	2	3	1	3	3	2
Secondary	Ysgol Rhosnesni	3	2	2	2	3	3	2
Nursery and Primary	Ysgol Min-y-Ddol	2	2	3	2	3	4	2
Nursery and Primary	St Mary's CIW Primary School	3	3	3	2	3	3	2
Secondary	Ysgol Clywedog	4	3	3	2	3	3	3

- 101 Link officers carry out an effective programme of monitoring visits to schools that relates well to each school's self-evaluation process. In the autumn term, they review each school's performance and negotiate challenging performance targets. In the other terms, they review the progress schools are making against priorities and agree the further support the school needs. This process is part of the targeted support and intervention strategy. Officers place schools into one of four categories. This process triggers support in proportion to the need for improvement. However, the criteria to place schools in different categories and the amount of support to which they are entitled are not transparent and are not shared with schools.
- 102 The authority responds quickly to help under-performing primary schools improve. Officers put into place a well-planned recovery programme. In schools that are targeted for maximum support, the headteacher, the chair of governors, the education psychologist, learning support and human resources staff and the primary team meet on a regular basis to monitor developments. When primary schools show good improvement, officers appropriately provide less support as the school takes responsibility for sustaining progress.
- 103 In secondary schools, senior officers meet with the headteacher and governors to review performance rigorously and agree priorities for improvement. There is good and, at times, very good support by secondary officers that has a measurable impact on standards in subjects and aspects of provision. In a few secondary schools, pupil

performance improves when officers provide support, but the improvement is not sustained when the support is withdrawn. These schools are too dependent on officers and do not take enough responsibility for making improvements themselves. At the time of the inspection, one secondary school was judged to have serious weaknesses following its recent Estyn inspection.

- 104 Officers provide good support and appropriate challenge to the special school and, as a result, standards of achievement have improved. The targeted support for some subjects such as design and technology has had a positive impact on standards.

### **Curriculum support**

- 105 The authority has suitable well-qualified personnel to provide support in most curriculum areas and particularly so in the core subjects of the national curriculum and religious education. The quality of curriculum support is good overall and some of it is very good. There is currently insufficient support to help schools raise pupils' standards in ICT.
- 106 There is an appropriate range of initiatives in schools to support the development of basic skills. These initiatives include the Language and Play initiative and the Catch Up reading programme. Both these initiatives are of a very good quality and improve standards and learners' confidence. All Wrexham schools have gained the Basic Skills Quality Mark. Ten teachers in the secondary sector are following a Diploma Course in Basic Skills, which develops specialist teachers of basic skills.
- 107 Officers have provided good guidance for schools to enable them to develop key skills across the curriculum at key stage 2. The guidance however is not fully developed in a way that secondary schools can apply it at key stage 3.
- 108 The Athrawon Bro team is well established. They know the schools in Wrexham well and have fostered good working relationships with headteachers and teachers. The Welsh Language Board monitors the strategy for raising standards in Welsh. This monitoring procedure provides the service with a structured method for evaluating its practice and its target setting. However, there are no formal procedures to monitor and evaluate attainment at the end of key stage 2 in Welsh second language and service is therefore unable to measure the added value at key stage 3.
- 109 There is an effective partnership with Bangor University, to provide Welsh language training for primary school teachers. This training, which teachers mostly undertake after school hours, equips them with good skills and the confidence to teach Welsh second language to pupils in primary schools.
- 110 There is a wide range of professional development courses available to schools. The authority makes appropriate use of the Cymdeithas Dros Addysg Gymraeg (CYDAG) courses to supplement its own Welsh-medium training. Officers follow up the impact of training in school visits. This practice is particularly effective in targeted schools.
- 111 Good initiatives to improve the transition of pupils from primary to secondary schools include the 'Boost' project by the Youth Inclusion Service, the Pupil Attitudes to School and Self (PASS) programme, work on pupils' attitudes to learning by the

education psychologists and white board initiatives led the Welsh advisory service. Officers have supported all the consortia of schools in producing their transition plans but some secondary schools and departments still do not receive enough information about pupils when they transfer from Year 6 to Year 7.

- 112 Officers with responsibility for English have led the way in producing materials to help schools moderate teachers' assessments at key stage 2 and key stage 3. These materials have helped schools improve continuity in curriculum planning and assessment. Support for assessment is good at an individual subject level in secondary schools but there is no co-ordinated authority-led strategy to ensure consistency of approach across the core subjects or on a whole school basis.
- 113 The healthy schools initiative has been implemented in 71 of Wrexham's schools. This initiative is on course to be completed by 2009, which is a year ahead of the WAG target. This initiative has shown improvements in nutrition mainly in primary schools.
- 114 The authority provides very good support to extend the learning opportunities for pupils. This is particularly good in music, physical education and school sport, and the work of the Schools' Library Service.

### **Support for managers and leaders**

- 115 The authority provides effective support for the national programmes for school leaders and aspiring leaders. They ensure that aspiring headteachers are given suitable experiences that prepare them for the National Professional Qualification for Headteachers (NPQH) courses. There is a good induction programme, school-based support and mentoring for new headteachers.
- 116 There is a good range of courses for middle managers in both primary and secondary schools. These courses are of good quality.
- 117 Governors are offered induction sessions and a variety of training events and useful information leaflets. The quality of support that is offered is good but very few governors attend generic courses. Officers have introduced whole governing body training to make training more attractive and relevant to governors' needs. Governors receive data that enable them to monitor and challenge their school's performance.

<b>Promoting social inclusion and well-being</b> <b>Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings</b>
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### **Meeting statutory duties and the needs of specific groups of pupils and young people**

- 118 Officers and elected members work well together as corporate parents to ensure that children looked after by the authority receive their full entitlement to education and achieve good standards.

- 119 The planning arrangements for pupils that the authority finds difficult to place in local schools are made on a multi-agency basis at the Joint Commissioning Panel (JCP). There are presently 10 children and young people placed in residential schools outside the county borough. Placements are monitored carefully with officers from both education and social care visiting at least annually, in addition to the reviewing officer visits. There are appropriate links between the JCP and the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB).
- 120 Schools receive good guidance and support to develop procedures to protect the well-being of pupils. Officers have recently introduced a new initiative to improve intervention services for children, young people and their families. The *Team Around The Child* (TAC) initiative brings together partners from different agencies to plan and implement individual packages of provision which meet the child's needs, provide early intervention and work in co-operation with children and families in planning and providing support. The scheme is still at an early stage but indicators suggest it will provide a system of cohesive support with easy access to advice and guidance for schools.

#### **Support for looked-after children**

The corporate parenting panel receives regular reports about looked-after children and monitors closely their individual progress. In 2007, 88% of looked-after children left school with qualifications compared with about 25% nationally.

Members are strongly represented on the corporate parenting panel and carry out their corporate parenting responsibility very thoroughly. For example, they have helped to set up a council employment scheme for looked-after children when they leave school. This scheme was developed in response to the difficulties experienced by young people in finding suitable work-related training opportunities.

Officers have fostered effective partnership arrangements with CAMHS to provide support for the most vulnerable young people. One outcome of this partnership has developed into an outstanding feature of the support for looked-after children. This is an initial and subsequent annual assessment by CAMHS of every looked after child. The assessment helps officers put together cohesive packages of support and assists in the choice of appropriate school placement both inside and outside the local authority.

- 121 The authority is responding appropriately to the significant increase in demand for English as an additional language (EAL) service. The overall number of pupils with EAL increased sharply in the past three years, rising from 199 in 2004 to 665 in 2007.
- 122 The EAL service has recently reviewed its priorities and methods of delivery in consultation with key partners in schools.

### **Effective provision for pupils with English as an Additional Language**

The EAL service provides mainstream teachers with well-planned advice and training to help them to meet the needs of a rapidly increasing number of newly-arrived pupils. Individual pupils receive good-quality specialist teaching and support and, as a result, they make good progress.

A partnership arrangement with other local authorities in the region enables officers and advisory teachers to plan and deliver effective training about EAL, tackling all forms of racism and promoting racial harmony.

A biennial Tapestry of Life and Faith festival celebrates religious, cultural and linguistic diversity and involves over 7,000 pupils. A high-profile concert involving Somali, Portuguese, Welsh and English pupils has recently won a Wales diversity award.

In response to the large increase of Portuguese pupils in its schools, the authority has developed a very productive collaboration with the Portuguese Embassy which has resulted in the funding of an additional teacher post. The authority also employs Polish learning support assistants and interpreters.

- 123 The authority meets the needs of pupils from minority ethnic groups, refugee families and the Gypsy Traveller community very effectively. Grant funding for work to support these pupils has reduced overall but the authority has made up much of the shortfall to sustain its specialist staffing and support programmes. There are between 50 and 100 pupils in the Gypsy Travellers' community at any one time.

### **Effective provision for pupils from the Gypsy Traveller community**

The support team for pupils from the Gypsy Traveller community includes a part-time teacher, three teaching assistants, a social worker and a youth worker. Provision includes a home service for pre-school children, play workers at primary schools that Gypsy Traveller pupils attend, training for all schools that have Gypsy Traveller pupils and support from the Youth Service. At key stage 4, pupils who are not in full-time mainstream education can follow alternative courses that gain them qualifications.

The inclusion service tracks pupils' attendance, progress and achievement closely. There are good links with schools and with other local authorities to ensure continuity for these pupils when they move.

There are good levels of trust between the service, the Gypsy Traveller community and schools. This is because the service involves parents closely to resolve any tensions as pupils adjust to school routines and to help them achieve well.

The authority has good initiatives, such as projects led by the Theatre in Education team, to improve pupils' and parents' understanding of the travellers' community within the county.

## Support for behaviour in schools

- 124 The authority has made good progress in implementing the recommendations of a comprehensive review of behaviour support services. This includes the appropriate restructuring of the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) provision into separate key stages. In addition, the Behaviour Support Service, the key stage 3 provision and the Outreach Support Service have been sensibly brought under the leadership of one manager. This brings cohesion to service planning and delivery. The arrangements for key stage 3 pupils enable them to access a wide range of appropriate provision for 25 hours each week.
- 125 Officers have worked well with secondary schools to change the way in which schools expect the PRU to provide for key stage 3 pupils. This has resulted in the acceptance by schools that pupils should only attend the PRU for a specified period of time before their return to mainstream schools. An important feature of the reviewed service for key stage 3 is the understanding that the curriculum needs of pupils attending the PRU continue to be maintained by the mainstream school. This allows pupils to integrate back into school with minimal disturbance to their education. In addition, pupils are benefiting from the PRU's initial assessment which is helping to identify correctly the learning needs of each individual in relation to their behaviour.
- 126 Despite clear improvements to the structure of the PRUs, the authority has not made sufficient progress in implementing all the recommendations for key stage 4 pupils since Estyn's last inspections of the PRUs. This includes the recommendation to provide young people with 25 hours of education each week.
- 127 Although the Children and Young People Service has an identified structure for the management of the PRU provision, there is a lack of clarity about these arrangements by some PRU staff. These uncertainties about lines of responsibility are hampering the rate of improvement in service provision. Overall, the education of pupils in the PRU provision does not have enough focus in the priorities of the Children and Young People Service. The service does not always deploy the staff of the PRUs to ensure economy and effectiveness.
- 128 The authority is taking appropriate actions to reduce exclusion rates. The rate of permanent exclusions from secondary schools<sup>14</sup> has reduced since 2004 and is now well below the average for Wales. Although they are steadily reducing in number, fixed-term exclusions are still too high and amongst the highest in Wales.

<b>Permanent exclusions (rate per 1,000 pupils)</b>	<b>2003-2004</b>	<b>2004-2005</b>	<b>2005-2006</b>
Wrexham	1.5	1.0	1.1
Wales	1.6	1.9	1.9
Rank	10	6	11

<sup>14</sup> Sources: National Statistics: SDR 29/2005, Exclusions from Schools in Wales, 2003/04; SDR 32/2006, Exclusions from Schools in Wales, 2004/05; SDR 32/2007, Exclusions from Schools in Wales, 2005/06

<b>Fixed term of five days or fewer (rate per 1,000 pupils)</b>	<b>2003-2004</b>	<b>2004-2005</b>	<b>2005-2006</b>
Wrexham	125.3	106.1	96.3
Wales	56.3	69.7	70.7
Rank	22	21	19

<b>Fixed term of six days or more (rate per 1,000 pupils)</b>	<b>2003-2004</b>	<b>2004-2005</b>	<b>2005-2006</b>
Wrexham	16.2	21.5	16.2
Wales	8.2	9.9	9.0
Rank	22	22	21

- 129 Close working between the educational psychology service, the educational social work team, the youth work in education team and the behaviour support service enables the authority to offer a range of initiatives and options to help mainstream schools manage pupils' behaviour. An appropriate range of whole school and individual training is also provided to help staff in schools improve their behaviour management techniques. Good joint working within the Children and Young People Service and with other partners is helping professionals to intervene earlier with challenging pupils and this has the potential to reduce the need for future support and to reduce exclusions further.
- 130 The Pupil Attitudes to Self and School (PASS) programme is effectively helping teachers in mainstream secondary schools to identify and address barriers to learning that arise from aspects of pupils' social, emotional and behavioural needs.
- 131 Good training for teachers and support staff, often provided with partners from external agencies, is helping professionals understand better the needs of vulnerable pupils. However, schools do not always recognise the potential link between poor behaviour and learning difficulties. As a result, some pupils' learning needs are not identified until their behavioural needs become a priority.
- 132 Despite a good record of initiatives and anti-bullying activities, the authority recognises the need for further joint strategic planning with other agencies and providers to develop improved advice and support to schools. A task and finish group is currently planning work to promote the implementation of effective anti-bullying policies.

### **Support for attendance at school**

- 133 The Education Social Work Service provides very good support to help schools improve pupils' attendance. The service has very effective working relationships with the police, the local Youth Offending Team and other agencies to help reduce the causes of poor attendance of pupils at school. It has also developed an innovative initiative with local travel agencies to discourage parents from taking children on holiday during school term times.
- 134 Attendance in primary schools is above the Wales average. Between 2005 and 2006, attendance improved in secondary schools by almost one percentage point to exceed the Wales average. Wrexham was one of only two authorities in Wales to improve attendance in secondary schools in 2006.

Primary schools <sup>15</sup>	2003-2004		2004-2005		2005-2006	
	Attendance	Unauthorised absences	Attendance	Unauthorised absences	Attendance	Unauthorised absences
Wrexham	92.8%	0.6%	94.1%	0.6%	93.6%	0.8%
Wales	93.2%	0.7%	93.1%	0.8%	92.5%	1.0%
Rank	15	11	5	11	5	13

Secondary schools <sup>16</sup>	2003-2004		2004-2005		2005-2006	
	Attendance	Unauthorised absences	Attendance	Unauthorised absences	Attendance	Unauthorised absences
Wrexham	90.3%	1.7%	90.4%	1.6%	91.3%	1.4%
Wales	90.6%	1.7%	90.6%	1.7%	90.2%	1.7%
Rank	13	12	14	12	3	9

- 135 There is appropriate guidance for parents who wish to educate their children at home. The authority monitors the provision that parents make for them. However, for children with statements of special educational needs (SEN) officers maintain much closer links and review progress more frequently.

<p><b>Additional learning needs (ALN)</b> <b>Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings</b></p>
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### Meeting statutory duties

- 136 The authority makes good provision and provides high-quality professional advice and support for pre-school and school-age children and young people with additional learning needs. These pupils achieve good standards in learning and behaviour in the authority's nursery, primary, secondary and special schools.
- 137 The authority meets the statutory requirements of the SEN and Disability Act (2001). Assessments, statements and annual reviews are completed efficiently and promptly. The quality of statements and annual review documents is good and information for parents and schools is very clear. Assessments and statements of SEN are appropriately detailed and clearly specify pupils' needs, educational objectives and provision. Officers monitor rigorously the progress of all pupils with statements of SEN, giving particular priority to pupils moving between key stages and to those placed out-of-county.
- 138 The authority makes reasonable adjustments so that individual disabled children can access mainstream education, either in their local school or in resourced provision, according to needs and parental preference. However, work to improve the accessibility of schools is proceeding too slowly.

<sup>15</sup> Sources: National Statistics: SDR 20/2005 (R), Absenteeism from Primary Schools in Wales, 2003/04; SDR 25/2006, Absenteeism from Primary Schools in Wales, 2004/05; SDR 24/2007, Absenteeism from Primary Schools in Wales, 2006

<sup>16</sup> Sources: National Statistics: SDR 107/2005 (R), Absenteeism from Secondary Schools in Wales, 2004/05 and 1998 – 2004 (Revised); SDR 143/2006, Absenteeism from Secondary Schools in Wales, 2005/06

### **Provision for pupils with ALN**

- 139 Specialist teams within the Children and Young People Service provide good support for individual children, their families and their schools. These teams work closely with each other, and with key external agencies, to raise standards and promote the successful inclusion of pupils with hearing, vision, medical, communication, learning and behavioural needs.
- 140 There are good arrangements for identifying and assessing the needs of pre-school children and for providing early support in partnership with local child health services.
- 141 Over the past two years, the Educational Psychology Service has taken a lead role in developing effective partnership working with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service. Access to effective multi-agency support for children with a range of needs, including mental health needs, emotional and behavioural difficulties and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), is good and improving.
- 142 The authority works closely in partnership with the health service and with neighbouring authorities to provide good support for pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties, including autistic spectrum disorders (ASD).
- 143 Children and young people with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) have good access to multi-agency assessments and to mainstream and specialist educational provision.
- 144 The good joint working between specialist teachers and the local Speech and Language Therapy Service has significantly improved access for service users to advice and support for pupils with speech and language difficulties. The authority is making good progress in developing an Integrated Speech, Language and Communication Service (ISLACs) in partnership with a neighbouring authority, the Local Health Board and the North East Wales NHS Trust.
- 145 The new provision for pupils with multi-sensory impairment is of high quality and very well resourced, though currently underused. The authority is working closely with the Welsh Assembly Government to make full use of this valuable provision by establishing formal partnership agreements with other authorities in the region.
- 146 The proportion of pupils with statements, at 4.37%, is well above the Welsh average of 3.15%, and is the third highest in Wales. The authority educates a relatively high proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs (SEN) in special classes or units in mainstream schools, and a correspondingly low proportion in ordinary classes in mainstream schools. The school placement of pupils with statements of SEN in January 2007 was:

School placement	Percentage (Wrexham)	Percentage (Wales)
Mainstream schools (ordinary classes)	29.0	50.9
Mainstream schools (special classes or units)	48.6	20.2
Maintained special schools	20.3	24.4
Independent schools (including non-maintained)	1.4	2.2
Pupil referral units/other than at school	0.7	2.5

- 147 The authority is working effectively to build the capacity of mainstream schools to identify and meet pupils' additional learning needs. This work is at a more advanced stage in secondary schools than in primary schools.
- 148 There are several very good initiatives aimed at promoting the inclusion of pupils with SEN in mainstream schools, including dyslexia-friendly and autism-friendly schooling, the Accelerating Achievement programme and the recent provision of specialist advisory support for schools to help them to address pupils' speech, language and communication difficulties.
- 149 The 'Unlocking the Potential' project is effectively helping mainstream secondary schools to improve standards of achievement of less-able pupils and those whose behaviour places them at risk of exclusion. This project draws on the expertise of staff in the authority's special school, and is closely linked with the work of the 14-19 Network. Through the 14-19 Network, older pupils with additional learning needs have good, and improving, access to a wide range of appropriate learning opportunities in schools, colleges and work-based learning settings.
- 150 Specialist teachers and educational psychologists provide special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) with good training and support, including through the medium of Welsh. However, there are not enough training opportunities for mainstream class teachers to help them to improve their understanding of the needs of pupils with SEN. The authority's in-service training programmes for basic skills and SEN are not linked closely enough.
- 151 There is a good strategy for raising standards for pupils who are more able and talented. The strategy places appropriate emphasis on whole-school approaches and is supported by some well-planned enrichment activities that are linked with curriculum areas, such as science and religious education.

### **Work with parents and carers**

- 152 The authority provides parents and carers with good advice and guidance, particularly when statutory assessment is being considered. The SEN Parent Partnership service that is provided locally by the Citizen's Advice Bureau works well in partnership with the authority and provides parents and carers with good advice and support. There are good arrangements for parents to provide the authority with feedback about the statutory assessment process for SEN and for them to contribute to assessments and reviews of their children's progress. The low rate of appeal to

the SEN Tribunal for Wales indicates that the authority is generally successful in negotiating with parents and reaching agreement about the most appropriate provision for their children.

- 153 Although communication with parents and carers is generally good, the authority's information for service users has not kept pace with the progress in developing new services. As a result, parents and carers do not always know how to access the most appropriate services for their children.
- 154 In response to shortcomings identified in the last inspection of SEN, the authority has taken effective action to improve the monitoring and control of expenditure from the authority's centrally-held SEN budgets. Following a thorough review in 2005, the authority increased overall funding for SEN and revised the formula for funding SEN through schools' delegated budgets in a way that removes the incentive for schools to seek statements of SEN. The new formula was introduced in primary schools in April 2006, and there are firm plans to implement an equivalent system in secondary schools in April 2008. At the same time, the authority plans to introduce a tighter system for monitoring the use of all delegated SEN funding.

<b>Access and school organisation</b> <b>Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings</b>
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### **Provision of school places**

- 155 The authority has taken important steps to reorganise primary education in order to improve the learning environment and the quality of education. In 2006, the net surplus capacity had increased to 21.3% compared to the Wales average of 17.7% and placed the authority seventh highest among all local authorities in Wales. There were 2,790 unfilled places in total. Twenty-seven out of 73 (37%) schools have significant surplus places. A programme of primary school amalgamations has seen the effective closures of 16 schools and the opening of eight new schools in the five years ending in September 2007. These actions, along with the recalculation of primary school capacity, will see capacity reduced to around 10.5% in 2009.
- 156 By 2006, the net surplus capacity in secondary schools had gone up to 18.9% compared to the Welsh average of 13.6%, placing the authority fifth highest among all local authorities in Wales. There are 1,637 unfilled places in the secondary sector. At the time of the inspection, four out of the nine secondary schools had significant surplus places. The remodelling of three secondary schools will lead to a reduction in unfilled places, especially those in temporary accommodation.
- 157 Overall, there are enough places for Welsh-medium education. However, because of their location, some Welsh-medium primary schools are oversubscribed and others have spare places. All parents wishing to access Welsh-medium education can do so but there are not enough places to meet parents' first preference. The authority has recently carried out a survey of pre-school children to assess parental demand for Welsh-medium education. However, no strategy is yet in place to address the expected demand.

### **Asset management planning**

- 158 The corporate asset management plan (AMP) sets out clear aims and objectives in the context of the authority's corporate priorities. The recently-developed school asset management plan (SAMP) provides a good overview of the current position regarding the maintenance and improvement of the school building stock and the future actions are set out clearly.
- 159 This plan has yet to be shared with schools. The Transport and Asset Management (TAM) service has a range of data about the condition and suitability of school buildings. Progress on asset management planning has been slow because of a lack of financial and staffing resources in the service. As a result, since the last inspection there has been little progress on completing a database on the condition, suitability and sufficiency of schools. As a result, information on the condition of school buildings is out of date and the authority has yet to issue a contract for its collection. It is hoped that this survey will also gather information on sufficiency and suitability. At present, this information provides an inadequate basis for prioritising building projects and reorganisation proposals.
- 160 There has been significant capital investment in education since 1996 of about £70 million. This includes grant funding but also a substantial proportion of £48 million from the council, including funding raised through the sale of council property. Even so, the condition of many of the authority's buildings is unsatisfactory and there is a maintenance backlog of £27 million. The authority is making suitable progress in removing temporary classrooms. There are appropriate plans to remove some of those temporary places that remain through capital building programmes, to remodel three secondary schools and the primary review.
- 161 The authority has been appropriately addressing the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). The authority has carried out detailed surveys and has prioritised the work that needs to be done. It has also responded appropriately to unexpected demands. Whilst many potential DDA project schemes have been drawn up, there is no funding to take them forward because the budget allocation has been frozen this year as the authority is addressing potential high risk traffic management issues at individual school sites.

### **Admissions to schools**

- 162 The authority manages admissions to schools efficiently and consults other admissions authorities effectively. Officers provide very clear, timely and accessible information for parents. Almost all parents receive a place for their child that meets their first preference.
- 163 The authority's arrangements to move pupils with behavioural difficulties to another school are helping to increase access to education for some pupils who would otherwise be at risk of permanent exclusion from school. The new arrangements for admitting pupils to the authority's pupil referral unit are beginning to improve the continuity of learning, especially for some of the most challenging pupils at key stage 3.

### Home-to-school transport

- 164 The home-to-school transport policy is clear and readily available to parents. It complements the school admissions policy but is under review. The authority manages the provision of home-to-school transport effectively. The authority places a very high priority on ensuring pupils on school buses and taxis are provided with a safe and generally reliable service.
- 165 In response to complaints, the authority challenges contractors to take suitable action to correct the problem. Where problems persist, the authority imposes fines and, when necessary, terminates contracts.
- 166 In the Audit Commission school survey in 2007, schools that responded rated the service the worst in England and Wales. Secondary schools rated the service lower than primary schools. This is mainly to do with the quality of a few vehicles used by a few contractors and a lack of communication between contractors, the authority and some schools over changes to transport arrangements, particularly at the start of the school year. Also schools are concerned with how the concessionary transport policy is being administered. Although officers and members have identified inconsistencies in the policy, these inconsistencies are currently not being tackled. This is an important shortcoming.

### Support services

#### Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

- 167 Overall, schools are satisfied with the support services they receive from the authority. In the 2007 Audit Commission school survey, schools gave most individual services a more positive rating than the average across England and Wales. However, when asked about the clarity of support service specifications and about the authority's support in enabling schools to be effective purchasers, the results were below average. Secondary schools consistently viewed support services less favourably than primary schools.
- 168 The current 11 service level agreements (SLAs) do not provide schools with a good basis to enable them to exercise choice or to monitor the value of the services they receive. The SLAs were initiated in April 2003 with schools that purchased them being required to commit to a five-year agreement for individual services or an integrated package. With one exception, all schools purchased most of the SLAs. This length of time is unsatisfactory because it restricts schools' ability to change their service provider to take account of changing circumstances. Most of the SLAs are unclear about the level of service that schools will receive, and about the respective responsibilities of the authority and schools.
- 169 New SLAs, which are to be introduced in April 2008, are likely to address many of the current weaknesses. The draft SLAs currently being consulted on will have a three-year duration but a three-month termination option. This will enable schools to withdraw from contracts should they fail to deliver value for money. Most of the draft SLAs provide a clear definition of service standards and they set out the respective responsibilities of the authority and schools. However, none of the SLAs provides any choice over the level or volume of services received. Furthermore, some

services are unnecessarily packaged together so that, for example, schools purchasing legal support must also enter into the contracts for human resources (HR) and health and safety services.

### **Corporate services for education, including schools**

- 170 Recent structural changes in the delivery of corporate support services have provided the benefit of most staff being part of a specialist corporate department but located alongside the services they support. All finance staff directly supporting the Children and Young People Service or schools specialise in these areas and are located in Ty Henblas along with the principal accountant who manages them. Similarly, HR staff supporting schools and parts of the Children and Young People Service are located and managed by a personnel manager within Ty Henblas. This arrangement has yet to be extended to those HR staff who support the Children and Young People Service areas that previously came under children's social services.

### **Finance**

- 171 Schools receive good support for the management of their budgets. Every primary school has an indicative budget meeting with a local management of schools (LMS) officer before the start of the financial year and a further budget planning meeting shortly into the new financial year. The service also provides training courses and written guidance on financial management. Only six schools (one nursery, three primaries and two secondaries) were in deficit at the end of the 2006-2007 financial year. Of these, only the two secondary schools had deficits of more than £3,500.

### **Human resources (HR)**

- 172 HR provides an effective service to schools. Each school is linked to one of three personnel officers who provide advice and casework as part of a service level agreement. Personnel officers have a very good knowledge of personnel issues in education. Though staff turnover within HR has led to service discontinuities in the past, effective arrangements are in place to manage current and future absences of personnel officers.
- 173 The HR support service to schools and governors is fairly comprehensive, but there are some shortcomings. The service makes model HR policies available to schools for many functions, and is developing others. Currently, there is limited work taking place on workforce strategy and planning. Central personnel records are not routinely checked against school-based records and some older records are incomplete. Although there are efficient systems to pass HR information to the payroll section, the computer systems for HR and payroll are not linked.

### **Information communication technology (ICT)**

- 174 The new Performance Analysis Team within the service provides good support for data management and communication between schools and the authority. All schools purchase the existing SLA, but it does not reflect the full extent of the data and software support service provided. Systems are in place for the verification and validation of administrative data, with a recent audit of pupil numbers confirming accurate record keeping in schools.

- 175 The corporate Information Systems department provides good support for ICT. The SLA with schools provides clear and specific service standards that are routinely monitored. All calls are logged and managers receive daily and weekly reports on jobs that have not been completed. In the Audit Commission survey schools rated technical support for ICT the most highly of any Wrexham service, with 38% rating it as excellent and a further 40% rating it as good.
- 176 The council's award-winning website provides the public with a range of useful information, including key education policies and plans, inspection reports and information about schools. The website is well signposted with information easy to find. However, there is little explicit reference to the Children and Young People Service and information covering its services is split between two sections of the website: 'Education & learning' and 'Community & living'. An intranet facility has recently been developed, with information available to schools, but it is not yet widely used.

### **Property-related services**

- 177 The respective responsibilities of schools and the council with regard to building repairs and maintenance are appropriately set out as part of the SLA. There is currently a detailed document defining what is covered by non-delegated capital works, delegated maintenance and delegated repairs. The service is updating and expanding the document and SLA with effect from April 2008, following the work of a task group of officers and representatives from schools. In addition to the SLA for building maintenance, an additional SLA provides schools with the option to transfer back their delegated repairs budget for the authority to manage on their behalf. Nineteen primary schools have chosen this option, which helpfully acts as a form of insurance scheme.
- 178 The prioritisation of work carried out under the maintenance SLA is not transparent. Because the amount in the delegated budgets is insufficient to meet all delegated responsibilities adequately, the SLA repairs budget is being targeted at regulatory compliance. The new repairs and maintenance policy has clearer priority planning but schools are not aware of this.
- 179 The quality of building maintenance services gets a relatively low rating in the Audit Commission school survey when compared to Wrexham's other services, but when compared to building maintenance in other authorities in England and Wales it is within the top 25% of local authorities.

### **School meals**

- 180 The council's statutory responsibilities for school meals are carried out well. Free school meals applications are handled effectively, with application forms available in English, Welsh, Polish and Portuguese. A full-time maintenance engineer is employed to repair and maintain all kitchen equipment. This work is mainly reactive and the authority has yet to develop a preventative maintenance schedule. All but one secondary schools use the authority's catering service.

181 The authority has appropriate arrangements to ensure that schools meet their statutory duties for hygiene, nutritional standards and health and safety. Two area supervisors monitor each site twice yearly on an unannounced basis. As part of each visit the supervisors complete a checklist covering food quality and healthy options. In 2004, the authority carried out survey of a sample of parents of primary school pupils focussing on the quality, cost and choice of school meals. Results were reported to scrutiny and led to service improvements.

**Findings: Will the local authority's performance improve?**

**Strategic management**

**Grade 2: Improvement prospects are good, with no major barriers**

- 182 In the past two years, elected members have shown a firm commitment to improving school performance, the quality of learning experiences and the achievements of all children and young people, particularly vulnerable groups. They plan to maintain budgets for these purposes at their highest possible level. They challenge officers and schools where improvements are slower than expected and hold them accountable for the effective use of resources to make improvements.
- 183 The very positive leadership demonstrated by senior officers is likely to secure further improvements. Chief Officers work effectively together and, in two years, have secured the support of stakeholders for the authority's challenging priorities and the new Children and Young People Service. Important strategies for raising achievement in secondary schools and improving primary school organisation are making an impact on standards and the quality of provision. However, the lack of clarity in the line management and accountability for the chief officers has the potential to hamper progress in planning and decision making.
- 184 Consultation processes are very well established with schools and a range of partners. However, the authority has recognised the need to make further improvements and is developing a Participation Strategy to reach out, inform and capture the views of children and young people, their families and other stakeholders.
- 185 The new management structure of the Children and Young People Service is beginning to improve the quality and range of services through more effective joint working across departments although the three departments are not yet planning and operating in a fully-integrated way. Although partnership working varies, there are a number of new multi-agency initiatives that provide good models of innovative ways to achieve better outcomes for learners.
- 186 The way in which the authority has improved its strategic planning, scrutiny and performance monitoring functions increases the likelihood of success in meeting its objectives. At service level, operational work focuses well on strategic priorities and delivering effective services but many plans do not include specific objectives or are fully costed. This makes it difficult for the authority to measure the impact of services and their value for money. The authority has taken action to put right this shortcoming by creating a new Performance, Support and Development section within the Children and Young People Service to improve performance management across all its departments.
- 187 The chief executive has requested an internal evaluation of the effectiveness of the new Children and Young People Service. The findings should inform planning for further improvement from April 2008.

**Support for school improvement**

**Grade 2: Improvement prospects are good, with no major barriers**

- 188 The authority has addressed all the recommendations for school improvement in its last inspection of the school improvement service in 2004. Standards are high and continue to improve in primary schools. The strategy that the authority put into place in 2005 to raise achievement in secondary schools has had a significant impact in raising standards. The authority has a very good understanding of school performance and the priorities for improvement. Officers and members have increased the level of challenge to schools and almost all headteachers have responded positively.
- 189 There is a good range of expertise in the school improvement teams that has made an impact through targeted support and intervention. The authority is aware that it needs to make its support for schools causing concern as robust in the secondary phase as it is in primary phase.
- 190 Officers are aware that they need to improve integrated working across departments and plan to use the forthcoming review of the service to make improvements in this aspect of their work.

**Promoting social inclusion and well-being**

**Grade 2: Improvement prospects are good, with no major barriers**

- 191 The authority has significantly improved its corporate parenting role and looked after pupils now achieve well at GCSE. Good arrangements for behaviour support have improved attendance and are beginning to reduce exclusions from school. The fostering of effective partnerships and multi-agency working is improving services for vulnerable groups of young people.
- 192 The authority responds well to unexpected demands. It has provided good quality support to develop the capacity of schools to meet the very significant increase in the number of pupils for whom English is an additional language. The authority meets the needs of pupils from minority ethnic groups, refugee families and the Gypsy Traveller community very effectively.
- 193 It is improving the educational provision in the key stage 3 and key stage 4 pupil referral units but there are some uncertainties about sustained improvement because of a lack of clarity in line management arrangements.
- 194 The authority has addressed well all the recommendations relating to improving inclusion in the last inspection of the Learning Support Service in 2004.

**Additional learning needs (ALN)**

**Grade 1: Improvement prospects are good, with significant improvements already in place**

- 195 Leadership and management of services for pupils with additional learning needs are good at all levels. Over the past two years the investment of additional resources has delivered significant improvements in the quality and range of services and in outcomes for learners.

- 196 The authority has made good progress in addressing all the recommendations relating to improving services for learners with ALN in the last inspection of the Learning Support Service in 2004.
- 197 The significant improvements that are already in place are:
- the effective partnership work with CAMHS that has led to significant improvements in services for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural needs; and
  - the effective contribution of the Educational Psychology Service to school improvement work across the service that has had an impact on whole-school improvement programmes.
- 198 The authority plans to introduce a tighter system for monitoring the use of all delegated SEN funding in April 2008.

**Access and school organisation**

**Grade 3: Some good prospects, but barriers in important areas**

- 199 The authority has successfully carried out an extensive programme of amalgamations and closures in order to improve the learning environment and the quality of education. It has a good track record of significant capital investment in new and remodelled schools. There is a firm commitment by stakeholders to the current review of primary school organisation. This has the potential to bring about further improvements.
- 200 An important barrier to improvement is the lack of up-to-date information on the condition of school buildings. Without a complete set of data on condition, suitability and sufficiency of schools, the authority does not have an adequate basis to prioritise building projects or reorganisation proposals.

**Support services**

**Grade 3: Some good prospects, but barriers in important areas**

- 201 There are good prospects in the authority's work on support services, particularly with respect to the introduction of new SLAs. There is openness and trust between the authority and schools, which have encouraged open discussion on the new agreements. However, schools have limited experience of being effective purchasers and are currently over dependent on the authority. The new draft SLAs do not provide schools with enough choice, and in some cases impose unnecessary restrictions. With some exceptions, for example, catering and cleaning services, the authority does not consistently compare its costs and service quality with that in other authorities, nor does it regularly seek user feedback. As a result, neither the authority nor schools can be certain whether all support services are delivering value for money.

## **The authority's response to the report findings**

The staff, schools, governors, elected members and partners of Wrexham's Children and Young People Service wish to thank the Estyn inspection team for the thorough, thoughtful and professional manner in which they conducted this inspection. This was a full inspection of the entire LEA provision – only the second in Wales – and it was hard work and a learning experience for all concerned. The inspection process was a positive experience for us and, we believe and hope, for the Estyn team also.

An external, expert and objective eye on our current performance and prospects for future improvement is challenging, helpful and necessary; it helped us to look afresh at all that we do, and are seeking to do. We are pleased that the findings of the Estyn team closely match our self-evaluation and that they have, in the main, validated our belief that the Children and Young People Service provides good quality support to the authority's children and young people. These findings confirm that, through the leadership of our senior officers and elected members, we are working in an increasingly effective way with our schools and partners.

It is a matter of pride for us that the report is overwhelmingly positive, that the inspection team acknowledged our overall good performance and has identified outstanding features in a number of areas of our work; the skills, hard work and dedication of authority staff, and their good relationships with schools and partners are fully recognised. However, we are not complacent, we constantly strive to do better, and we will take careful note of both the overt report recommendations and the areas noted in the body of the report where we can do even better on behalf of children, young people and their families.

This report will provide an excellent reference point for further development, and we will link it to the reports and recommendations of the other two Estyn inspections currently being conducted in Wrexham: 14-19 Education and Youth Support Services.

The very positive findings of this report are a reflection of, and a worthy tribute to, the commitment of all staff, schools, governors, elected members and partners associated with Wrexham's Children and Young People Service and its Children and Young People's Framework Partnership – we thank them again for their patience, help and support during the process.

A carefully thought-through post-inspection action plan will be produced to address the recommendations of the report, and this will be timely in linking to and informing our Children and Young People's Plan, which is currently being worked on.

## Appendix 1

### The grade profile

	How good is the local authority's performance?	Will the local authority's performance improve?
Strategic management	2	2
Support for school improvement	2	2
Promoting social inclusion and well-being	2	2
Additional learning needs (ALN)	2	1
Access and school organisation	3	3
Support services	3	3

Key question	1 How effective is the authority's strategic planning?	2 How effective are the authority's services?	3 How effective are leadership and management?	4 How well do leaders and managers monitor, evaluate and improve services?
Strategic management	2	N/A	2	3
Support for school improvement	2	2	2	3
Promoting social inclusion and well-being	2	2	2	3
Additional learning needs (ALN)	2	2	1	2
Access and school organisation	3	3	3	3
Support services	2	3	3	3

## Appendix 2

### The inspection team

Andy Hawkins HMI	Estyn	Reporting Inspector
Farrukh Khan HMI	Estyn	Team Inspector
Ian Mackinder	Wales Audit Office	Team Inspector
Susan Roberts HMI	Estyn	Team Inspector
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Susan Willan HMI	Estyn	Team Inspector
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Gareth Williams	Estyn	Additional Inspector
Brett Pugh	Newport LEA	Peer Assessor
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