Quality and standards in education and training in Wales

A report on the quality of

Newport
Local Education Authority

January 2008

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 authorities (LAs);
- 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;
- LAs;
- 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.

Estyn also:

- 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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Publication Section
Estyn
Anchor Court
Keen Road
Cardiff
CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gsi.gov.uk

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The inspection

1 Local Education Authority (LEA) service inspections are carried out under section 38 of the Education Act 1997 and the Children Act 2004. The inspection framework for this cycle is on the Estyn website www.estyn.co.uk.

2 This inspection took place from 14 January 2008 to 25 January 2008. The focus of this inspection is on all of Newport City Authority’s education services. Before the inspection, the Education 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 Newport City Council is a Unitary Authority. The authority was formed as a County Borough in 1996, and obtained City Status in 2002. It is the eighth largest authority in Wales. The city of Newport has a population of about 140,000 and covers an area of approximately 73.5 square miles. It is the third largest urban area in Wales. Five of the city’s 20 wards are among the one hundred most deprived\(^1\) in Wales. Overall, the population of the city is in the top 25% within Wales for most indicators of social and economic deprivation, although five wards are among the 100 least deprived.

9 Within Newport's boundaries there is a wide range of linguistic, cultural and social traditions, often based on the nature of the different kind of communities in the city. The main ethnic minority communities in the city are Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Somali and Yemeni. The main languages spoken in addition to English and Welsh are Urdu, Punjabi, Bengali, Arabic and Somali. In all, approximately 1,800 pupils have English as an additional language.

Political governance

10 Newport City Council is made up of 50 members, elected in 20 wards throughout the city. The political balance of the authority is as follows:

- 31 Labour;
- 11 Conservative;
- 6 Liberal Democrats;
- 1 Plaid Cymru; and
- 1 Independent.

11 Elected members carry out various roles within the authority. All 50 members meet normally every six weeks and are responsible for deciding the budget and policy framework. The Mayor of Newport is elected by order of seniority and holds office for a year.

12 The Leader of the Council is elected annually by the majority group of Council members. The Leader’s role includes the role of Chair of Cabinet.

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\(^1\) This is calculated using the Index of Multiple Deprivation, published by the Local Government Data Unit-Wales. The Index is a weighted average of indicators which assess a population’s income, housing, educational qualifications, health, housing, child poverty and access to services.
Cabinet

Ten of the Council’s members make up the cabinet, including the Leader of the Council. The cabinet is responsible for taking most of the Council’s major decisions and decides resources are used to deliver services to the city. Cabinet members are responsible for decision making within specific areas of responsibility.

Overview and Scrutiny

The authority has established eight forums of nine non-executive members for the purposes of overview and scrutiny. Each forum is tasked with challenging and influencing the development of authority policies, helping to improve and maintain performance of the authority’s services and holding the cabinet to account. Each forum has its own work programme.

Corporate structure

The authority's management structure is based on service areas each overseen by a head of service. The authority's strategic role is overseen by a director's team, comprising a managing director and two corporate directors. Directors have collective responsibility for cultural change, European affairs and diversity.

The corporate director with the overview for education has the following responsibilities:

- strategic partnerships;
- children and young people’s framework partnerships;
- learning partnerships;
- aspects of community safety; and
- corporate performance and asset management.

The director has overall responsibility for services for children and young people. He also has a lead role in developing the council’s performance management arrangements, asset management, capital programme review, procurement and corporate training programme.

In addition, the director has an overview of the work of the heads of education services, the head of children and family services, head of continuing learning and leisure and head of law and standards.
Lifelong Learning and Leisure services is made up of the following officers:

- chief education officer;
- head of education improvement and inclusion;
- head of education resources and planning; and
- head of continuing learning and leisure.

**Chief education officer**

Following a senior management restructure of education services in 2005, the chief education officer is responsible for the strategic leadership of all education services, and the management of education services and resources, including services to schools. The chief education officer is supported by two heads of education services each with responsibility for a specific portfolio of services.

**Education services (improvement and inclusion)**

Improvement services include:

- the school improvement advisory services;
- governor support and e-learning and information support;
- Newport literacy and numeracy projects;
- Newport STEP ICT and intranet provision for schools; and
- the management of the Gwent music support service.

Inclusion services include:

- the management of services to children with special educational needs;
- the educational psychology and behaviour support service;
- education other than at school (EOTAS);
- home tuition and education welfare services;
- pupil referral units; and
- the management of the Gwent ethnic minority support service.
Education services (resourcing and planning)

23 Resourcing and planning services include the provision of:

- human resources;
- general administration and finance support to Newport schools;
- provision of buildings, capital and health & safety services;
- school organisation planning, including schools’ admissions and appeals;
- grants and loans for further and higher education;
- clothing grants;
- free school meal applications; and
- school transport.

Partnerships

24 The education service plays an active part in a number of partnerships across the authority and with external agencies. Many of these partnerships have strategic plans in place. These include:

- Children and Young People’s Framework Partnership;
- 14-19 Local Area Network; and
- Local Safeguarding of Children Board.

The Gwent Directors Group

25 This group involves the directors of education from Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Newport, Monmouthshire and Torfaen. The group has met half-termly since 1996 and oversees collaborative working on the following services:

- hearing and visual impairment support;
- specific language impairment support;
- Gwent music support;
- Gwent ethnic minority support service;
- schools library service;
- Gwent theatre;
- primary History Project; and
- outdoor education service.
Each of these services is hosted by one of the partner authorities but provides a service across the others.

**The South East Wales Consortium**

This consortium was established to support teacher workforce remodelling. It involves the directors of education from Blaenau Gwent, Cardiff, Newport, Monmouthshire and Torfaen. It meets twice each term. Its work has been extended under the Making the Connections and the Beecham agenda to look at further collaboration on school improvement services and additional learning needs support.

**Schools and pupils**

Newport maintains four nursery schools, 11 infants’ schools, 11 junior schools, 29 primary schools and eight secondary schools. One primary school provides education for pupils through the medium of Welsh. Secondary school pupils wishing to continue their education through the medium of Welsh attend a school in a neighbouring authority. Altogether, approximately 3% of primary age pupils and 2% of secondary age pupils receive their education through the medium of Welsh. The LEA also maintains a special school, pupil referral units and an education unit attached to a hospital. Ten primary schools and one secondary school have units catering for pupils with moderate and severe learning difficulties. Three secondary schools have learning support units catering for pupils with behavioural issues.

Around 24,000 children between the ages of 3-19 are registered as pupils (including those in the early years, Year 12 and Year 13) at LEA maintained establishments in Newport. The percentage of pupils entitled to free schools meals in January 2006 was 17.8%, compared with the Welsh average of 16%. The percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational needs in January 2007 was 4%, compared with the Welsh average of 3.2%.

**Funding**

The Welsh Assembly Government’s Standard Spending Assessment (SSA)\(^2\) per head of population for Newport City Council for 2007-2008 was close to the average for local authorities in Wales. Within this, the education component (education Indicator-Based Assessment (IBA)\(^3\)) amounted to just over £99 million. This represents about £4,200 for each pupil in Newport schools. This level of IBA is below the average for Wales, reflecting the fact that much of the city’s population lives in a comparatively densely populated area in which education services are less costly to deliver than in more rural areas.

The authority has a record of setting low rates of council tax. In order to do so, it sets its total revenue budget for managing and delivering all its services at a level below SSA. The net education budget for 2007/2008 is consistent with this overall level of spending and represents 97.7% of education IBA. This level of funding by the

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\(^2\) SSA is the means by which the Welsh Assembly Government distributes Revenue Support Grant to local authorities.

\(^3\) Education IBA is that part of SSA relating to the delivery of education services. Education IBA is not intended as a spending target and councils are free to spend at levels above or below IBA, in accordance with their priorities.
authority yielded a net education budget per pupil for 2007/2008 of £4,110 compared with an average of £4,312 for Wales as a whole. Including grants, spending within the Schools Budget, whether delegated or controlled centrally, amounted to £4,142 per pupil compared with an average of £4,208 across Wales.

32 The authority forecasts capital expenditure of about £8.5 million on its education estate during 2007-2008. This represents about £360 per pupil, a little lower than the average for Wales. However, the authority’s firm plans to rebuild two of its secondary schools will increase significantly its capital expenditure on education in future years.
Summary

Grade profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>How good is the local authority’s performance?</th>
<th>Will the local authority’s performance improve?</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Strategic management</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for school improvement</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting social inclusion and well-being</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>Additional learning needs (ALN)</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>Access and school organisation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support services</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Strategic management

33 The overall quality of strategic planning is good. The plans are clearly written, providing concise, unambiguous objectives and targets that guide service planning and provide a framework within which elected members, officers, schools and the authority’s partners may be held to account. Plans fit together well.

34 Budgets used to run services are well managed. The budget-setting process takes full account of all known pressures and potential savings across services to allow the accurate prioritisation of resources. Budgets to build new or to improve buildings are also well managed. The authority has been particularly successful in attracting contributions for new school buildings from property developers. In addition, the authority plans to use the sale of land to contribute to the rebuilding of two secondary schools.

35 Senior officers within the education service and at a corporate level provide high quality leadership and direction. Through the work of the Children and Young People’s partnership (CYPP), officers have led the development of a far-reaching vision for the education service in Newport, which has inclusion as key theme. As a result, young people learn effectively and increasingly take well-informed decisions about their own futures.

36 The respective decision making roles of officers and elected members is clear. Members have shown that they are willing to take difficult but necessary decisions.

37 Partnership working is developing well. Most contributory partnerships have agreed a strategy which clearly sets out the roles of partners, and the actions needed for bringing improvement, set within realistic timescales. Partners report that

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4 Under the Children Act this plan will be the strategic plan that brings together all plans relating to children and young people.
relationships with the authority are generally good. The process for developing the Children and Young People’s Plan (CYPP) is well structured, with subgroups chaired by representatives from a range of partners. These partners are responsible for the formulation and development of clearly defined areas in the CYPP.

38 Senior officers and elected members have a clear understanding, supported by an effective performance management system, of how well the education service performs and a good knowledge of which aspects need to be improved.

**Support for school improvement**

39 The school improvement service is a good service with outstanding features. The service monitors school performance well. This enables the service to challenge, support and intervene in schools appropriately. As a result, the performance of pupils in key stages 1 and 2 is outstanding. Achievements in key stage 3 have improved significantly in the past two years and are now good. The authority recognises the need to improve achievement at key stage 4 but has not yet agreed a key stage 4 strategy to improve the behaviour and attendance of pupils or to improve the curriculum offered in schools.

40 The authority provides a good range of data to schools. School improvement officers use this data well to understand how well different schools perform. Through regular visits, officers support schools well to set targets, judge the strengths and shortcomings of the school through self-evaluation and write school development plans. However, the authority has not yet agreed criteria with schools to judge how much additional support schools are entitled to where there are concerns about performance.

41 Curriculum support for numeracy and literacy is outstanding and has a significant impact on raising standards, particularly in primary schools. There is a good range of support for the development of basic skills including some very good support for information and communications technology ICT. Curriculum support in most other subjects is good. The authority is working with neighbouring local authorities to address gaps in subject knowledge.

42 Early years settings maintained by the authority and those settings run independently of the authority receive good support and comprehensive training opportunities from the Early Years special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo).

43 Extracurricular provision and out of school hours learning is very well provided through the music service, sports and recreation and environmental projects.

44 Overall, support is good for school leaders and managers. There is very effective support for governors. New headteachers are mentored effectively by experienced headteachers.
There are more good features than shortcomings in the authority’s work to promote social inclusion and well being. At present, the overall strategy for services delivering inclusion programmes is ineffective. As a result, services do not work together well enough to raise standards for all children and young people.

The authority is generally effective as a corporate parent to ensure that children looked after by the authority receive their full entitlement to education and achieve good standards. The new post of Child Protection Officer (CPO) has provided a significant link between schools and Children and Family Services, as well as between schools and other support services. The CPO ensures that schools receive guidance and support of very good quality to help them develop procedures to protect the well-being of pupils.

The Gwent Ethnic Minority Support Service (GEMSS), in partnership with school improvement, supports all schools across Newport to meet their statutory requirements under The Race Relations Amendment Act 2000. The work of GEMSS is variable in quality. It has suffered from poor management for a number of years. Staff have not been deployed consistently or effectively, which has caused much frustration in schools. Management and leadership have recently changed.

The authority has a working party reviewing its strategy to help schools improve attendance. This work has been put on hold until the restructuring of the Inclusion Services has been implemented. The present attendance strategy is not effective and has yet to impact consistently on overall school attendance levels. It has not succeeded in challenging present practice enough and in engaging children and young people so as to encourage them to attend school. This is because there is a lack of whole authority focus and consistency in the work with schools.

Although the standards of behaviour in schools inspected in the last year were good, and the number of pupils excluded from schools either permanently or for fixed periods fell compared to previous years, there are still too many pupils excluded from schools.

Excluded pupils at key stage 4 have individual learning packages that may constitute part-time or full-time education as appropriate to individual pupils. However, not all pupils have access to 25 hours provision, as set as an expectation by the Welsh Assembly Government, and very few of these permanently excluded pupils return to a mainstream school.

The authority, together with the Rowntree Foundation, provided good training related to anti-bullying to all primary and secondary schools.

Good features outweigh shortcomings in the additional learning needs (ALN) services. Specialist teachers, support workers, education inclusion officers and educational psychologists provide schools with good training and support. This is helping to increase the capacity of mainstream schools to meet pupils’ additional learning needs.
learning needs for themselves. However, some mainstream class teachers and support staff need more help to improve their understanding of the needs of pupils with ALN, in particular how to identify and support pupils who have social, emotional, behavioural difficulties.

53 The present arrangements for early intervention are underdeveloped and too many children have to wait too long before their needs are recognised. For some pupils, this delay leads eventually to very challenging behaviours which may result in exclusion from school.

54 The authority has worked effectively, over the past two years, to improve the way it negotiates with parents in reaching agreement about the most appropriate provision for their children. These improvements have enabled the previously unacceptably high numbers of appeals to the Special Educational Needs Tribunal for Wales (SENTW) to reduce significantly.

55 There is a good service for pupils who have Autistic Spectrum Disorder, delivered jointly, from the educational psychology and speech therapy services, as well as their parents and staff. This applies to both pre-school and school-age settings.

56 However, the present model of providing educational psychology services does not allow educational psychologists to use their expertise well enough. As a result, the authority does not provide enough early support and professional advice for pupils and their families, in partnership with other agencies.

Access and school organisation

57 The authority has effective arrangements for the management of admissions. Nearly all parents get their first choice of school for their children and there are relatively low numbers of admission refusals.

58 The home-to-school transport service is of generally good standard.

59 The corporate asset management planning process is well established. New schools have been designed to a high standard. The authority has been particularly successful in attracting contributions for new school buildings from property developers and plans to use the sale of land to contribute to the rebuilding of two secondary schools.

60 The authority has a good track record of taking action to close and amalgamate schools. This has reduced unfilled places to a low level compared with other authorities in Wales. There are further plans to amalgamate infant and junior schools.

61 Despite the overall low level of surplus capacity in Newport, there is significant\(^5\) surplus in some schools while others are oversubscribed\(^6\). Authority projections indicate a growth in the number of pupils and this, together with a review of school catchment areas, will reduce the surplus places.

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\(^5\) Schools with at least 25% of places unfilled are described as having significant surplus capacity.

\(^6\) Schools with 10% of pupils more than capacity are described as oversubscribed.
62 An important barrier to improvement is that information on school buildings is out of date. Without an up-to-date set of data on condition, suitability and sufficiency of schools, the authority does not have an adequate basis to prioritise reorganisation proposals. The authority has yet to identify funding streams for some of its school re-organisation schemes.

63 There is a limited access to support for teachers and pupils through the medium of Welsh in school improvement, inclusion and ALN services.

**Support services**

64 All support services have good features. Overall, schools report that they are satisfied with the support services they receive from the authority. In the Wales Audit Office and Estyn schools perception survey, schools rate school improvement services highly while they consider the quality of building maintenance and catering services to be poorer services.

65 Schools have the opportunity to purchase an appropriate range of services from the authority. Service level agreements (SLAs) provide schools with appropriate details of the support provided, the costs involved and their respective responsibilities. There is a high take-up by schools with few formal complaints made about the services received.

66 Schools and budget holders within the education service receive high quality financial support and advice.

67 The bursar group, primary schools support officer group and the School Forum provide opportunity for schools to feedback their views on the support services. However, the authority does not consistently compare service costs and quality with services in other authorities and in the private sector, 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

68 In order to secure the improvements that are needed, the authority should:

R1 work with schools to agree a clear strategy to improve achievement at key stage 4 including:

- improving the behaviour of learners and reducing exclusions;
- increasing attendance; and
- providing a wider curriculum for learners;

R2 better manage the expectations that schools have of the school improvement, inclusion and ALN services by refining the criteria for school support and intervention through:

- making clear the entitlement of schools to authority resources for school improvement;
- targeting authority resources in inverse proportion to the success of a school;
- ensuring sustained support for schools with serious weaknesses; and
- making better use of data about looked after children, pupils with additional learning needs and ethnic minority pupils in order to target resources and interventions;

R3 improve further the provision for specific groups of learners by:

- increasing the capacity of mainstream primary schools to identify and provide for pupils’ additional learning needs at an early stage; and
- improving the procedures, at an early stage, for identifying and responding to the needs of learners who are at risk of exclusion; and

R4 produce up-to-date information and data that will inform a long term strategy to:

- plan school places effectively;
- make school buildings fit for purpose; and
- meet the demand for primary and secondary Welsh-medium education.
Findings

How good is the LEA’s performance?

Strategic management
Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

Strategic planning

69 The overall quality of strategic planning is good. Key plans are consistent with each other and are set within a well-defined planning hierarchy. The plans are clearly written, providing concise, unambiguous objectives and targets that guide service planning and provide a framework within which elected members, officers, schools and the authority’s partners may be held to account.

70 Through the Community Strategy, the authority and its partners within the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) have set out a clear and ambitious vision for the city during the decade 2005-2015, a period of anticipated rapid economic and social change. While the main thrust is the regeneration of the city, the plan identifies clearly the social and educational consequences of change. The ‘Learning City’ and the ‘Inclusive City’ are themes within the plan, appropriately recognising that regeneration brings with it a demand for a better qualified workforce and a need to ensure equality of opportunity and social cohesion within a far more diverse population than in the past. The Community Strategy provides a clear focus to these ambitions by, for example, setting targets for improvements in basic skills and secondary school attendance.

71 The Corporate Plan makes plain the authority’s commitment to the Community Strategy and to improving the quality of and access to services. It sets out clearly the responsibilities of senior officers and elected members in delivering this commitment and the status of key plans in relation to each other. Within this framework, the Single Education Plan (SEP) is appropriately positioned as the overarching driver of the education service’s contribution to achieving the authority’s aims. The SEP is comprehensive and clear, setting realistic targets for most areas of work.

72 Consultation between the education service and its stakeholders, including young people, is increasingly effective. Headteachers report that consultation is now developing into joint planning rather than merely responding to plans that have already been drafted. Governors also report that communication is effective and that they are consulted on a wide range of issues.

Managing resources

73 Capital and revenue resources are well managed. The budget-setting process takes full account of all known pressures and potential savings across services to allow the accurate prioritisation of resources. This process has, for example, enabled the authority to limit the efficiency savings expected of schools for 2007-2008 to 0.3%. A reduction in secondary school budgets resulting from a fall in pupil numbers has been recycled within the education service to create a contingency fund. Two
hundred and forty thousand pounds from this contingency fund has been reallocated to schools, subject to their submitting appropriate action plans, in order to raise standards in key stage 4. Managers within the education service are very well supported by finance staff in monitoring expenditure in order to make full use of all resources.

74 The authority makes full use of available grant funding to supplement the education budget. For 2007-2008, 35 different grants totalling £18.3 million supplement the net education budget of £96.7 million. The administration of this number of grants, some of them comparatively small, is a time-consuming activity for the authority’s staff.

75 The authority and the Schools Budget Forum have worked well together to improve the school funding formula, increasing transparency and reducing the use of lump sum payments. Further work is underway to agree the extent to which funding based on pupil numbers should contribute to the provision for pupils with ALN in schools.

Leadership

76 Senior officers within the education service and at a corporate level provide leadership and direction which is of high quality. These officers have led the development of a far-reaching vision for the education service in Newport, which has inclusion as key theme. As a result, young people learn effectively and increasingly take well-informed decisions about their own futures. This vision forms the core of the emerging Children and Young People’s Plan.

77 Papers and briefings prepared for elected members are balanced, informative and well written. Where appropriate, they offer members alternative options but make unambiguous recommendations about the decisions that should be taken. Contributions to the papers by corporate officers about the financial, legal and human resources implications add value to the advice and help members reach appropriate conclusions.

78 The respective decision making roles of officers and elected members is clear. Members have shown that they are willing to take difficult but necessary decisions relating to, for example, the closure and amalgamation of schools and, more recently, the reorganisation of services.

Partnerships

79 Partnership working is developing well. Under the overall lead of the LSP, a family of partnerships is in place covering key areas of public interest. The authority has been awarded Excellence Wales status for its work in leading the strategic partnership. Performance management arrangements are developing well and the LSP reports its achievements annually.

80 Most contributory partnerships have agreed a strategy which clearly sets out the roles of partners, and the actions needed for bringing improvement, set within realistic timescales. Partners report that relationships with the authority are generally good. The process for developing the Children and Young People’s Plan (CYPP) is well structured, with subgroups chaired by a range of partners leading developments
in clearly defined areas and contributing to the formulation of the CYPP. The work of the Preventative Services Subgroup is already making an impact, albeit as a pilot project, by bringing together a range of services and agencies to work with the families of pupils referred to them by schools. By sharing information, the various agencies are able to provide better integrated support in order to prevent problems from escalating.

81 In addition to formal partnership working, the authority shares a range of specialist services with neighbouring authorities. Though there is some variation in quality, the services provide a more cost-effective solution than could be offered by any of the authorities working alone.

**Performance management**

82 Senior officers and elected members have a clear understanding of the performance of the education service and a good knowledge about those aspects that need to be improved. Performance management arrangements support this focus effectively. Each major service area has identified a ‘balanced scorecard’ which contains a manageable number of accurately measured indicators to encapsulate performance in key areas. However, the indicators within the education scorecard currently include too few measures that focus on performance in relation to the improvement of Newport’s school buildings. Similarly, there is too little use of data about the performance of specific groups of potentially vulnerable young people such as LAC and ethnic minority pupils in order to target improvement strategies.

83 Officers and elected members are able to access performance information electronically in a format that is easily understood. The system allows users to view current and past performance and to compare performance in Newport with that in other selected authorities. The respective roles of managers, the Performance Board (a Cabinet subgroup) and the Overview and Scrutiny Forum (OSF) in relation to performance management are clear. In addition, the OSF monitors progress in relation to the actions set out in the Education Service Plan twice a year.

84 At an operational level, service plans are written to a common format that conforms to corporate guidelines. They set out clearly the work that each service team needs to achieve, the timescale for the work and the officer responsible. Regular meetings between managers and their teams are generally effective in keeping work on track as well as identifying and putting right problems. Staff appraisals are conducted annually, resulting in personal development plans for each officer. Nevertheless, there have been weaknesses in middle management in some ALN and inclusion services. The authority has taken robust action to tackle these issues by commissioning external reviews by consultants. As a result, the decision to implement change has now been taken, but challenges remain to ensure that the process of managing change is effective in restoring staff morale in areas of the service that face a period of uncertainty.
Support for school improvement
Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

Performance of schools

85 At key stages 1 and 2, primary schools performance in Newport is consistently among the best for Wales. At key stage 3, the performance of secondary schools was similar to the average for Wales in 2006 and was above the average in 2007.

86 There is a trend of improving performance in national curriculum assessments in key stages 2 and 3.

87 The following tables compare the percentage of pupils in Newport schools that attained the core subject indicator\(^7\) (CSI) in National Curriculum teacher assessments in key stages 1, 2 and 3 in the last three years with that of pupils throughout Wales\(^8\).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key stage 1</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newport</td>
<td>87.0%</td>
<td>86.1%</td>
<td>85.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>80.9%</td>
<td>80.6%</td>
<td>80.1%</td>
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<table>
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<th>Key stage 2</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
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<tr>
<td>Newport</td>
<td>76.8%</td>
<td>78.8%</td>
<td>80.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>74.3%</td>
<td>74.2%</td>
<td>74.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>=1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key stage 3</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newport</td>
<td>54.0%</td>
<td>58.6%</td>
<td>60.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>57.4%</td>
<td>58.2%</td>
<td>56.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>=11</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

7 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.
9 The percentage of pupils achieving level 2 or above in English or Welsh (first language), mathematics and science in combination.
10 When performance is compared to all the 22 authorities across Wales.
11 The percentage of pupils achieving level 4 or above in English or Welsh (first language), mathematics and science in combination.
12 The percentage of pupils achieving level 5 or above in English or Welsh (first language), mathematics and science in combination.
Performance in non-core subject at key stage 3 is variable. The following table compares foundation subject performance with that of pupils throughout Wales in 2007.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Newport</th>
<th>Wales</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>74.2%</td>
<td>75.3%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design &amp; technology</td>
<td>73.7%</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>64.8%</td>
<td>70.4%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>66.3%</td>
<td>71.2%</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information technology</td>
<td>69.3%</td>
<td>72.4%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern foreign languages</td>
<td>51.8%</td>
<td>58.1%</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>72.0%</td>
<td>71.5%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical education</td>
<td>77.9%</td>
<td>71.5%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welsh (2nd language)</td>
<td>51.9%</td>
<td>50.6%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At key stage 4, secondary schools in Newport perform at a level that is consistently below the average for Wales.

The proportion of pupils attaining five or more A*-C grades at GCSE increased by 0.8 percentage points between 2005 and 2006 but fell by two percentage points between 2006 and 2007. The proportion of pupils attaining five or more A*-G grades has fallen consistently over the last four years and by 4.1 percentage points over the last two years.

The proportion of pupils leaving school with no GCSE, GNVQ or Entry Level qualifications has been consistently above the average for Wales but has decreased by half a percentage point over the last two years.

The following tables compare the performance of pupils in Newport schools with that of pupils throughout Wales in GCSE and GNVQ examinations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of pupils who gained 5 or more GCSEs grade A*-C or vocational equivalent</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newport</td>
<td>48.6%</td>
<td>49.4%</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>52.2%</td>
<td>53.8%</td>
<td>54.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>=18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of pupils who gained 5 or more GCSEs grade A*-G or vocational equivalent</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newport</td>
<td>86.0%</td>
<td>84.4%</td>
<td>81.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>85.2%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>85.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Schools are improving their performance in comparison with the performance of similar schools in other authorities in Wales. Overall, there is a trend of improving performance for key stages 1-3 although not at key stage 4.

---

13 SDR 148/2007, Teacher Assessments of the Non-Core Subjects at Key Stage 3, 2007
14 The percentage of pupils achieving level 5 or above in the subject
The tables below show the distribution of Newport schools within the top and bottom all-Wales Free School Meals Benchmark Quartiles\textsuperscript{16} for the Core Subject Indicator\textsuperscript{17} at each key stage.

### Key stage 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of schools in</th>
<th>2005 (41 schools)</th>
<th>2006 (41 schools)</th>
<th>2007 (41 schools)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highest quartile</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowest quartile</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Key stage 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of schools in</th>
<th>2005 (41 schools)</th>
<th>2006 (41 schools)</th>
<th>2007 (41 schools)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highest quartile</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>36.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowest quartile</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Key stage 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of schools in</th>
<th>2005 (8 schools)</th>
<th>2006 (8 schools)</th>
<th>2007 (8 schools)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highest quartile</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowest quartile</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Key stage 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of schools in</th>
<th>2005 (8 schools)</th>
<th>2006 (8 schools)</th>
<th>2007 (8 schools)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highest quartile</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowest quartile</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.

In 2006, Newport’s performance at key stage 3 was better than expected. At key stage 4, performance was above the expected benchmarks in 2005 but was at or slightly below expectations in 2006.

\textsuperscript{16} Each year school examination and test results are grouped together according to free school meal entitlement. Each group of schools is then divided into four quarters. This allows comparison between similar schools across Wales.

\textsuperscript{17} The Core Subject Indictor represents the percentage of pupils achieving the expected level or above in English or Welsh (first language), mathematics and science in combination.
Support, monitoring, challenge and intervention

97 The authority provides a wide range of very effective challenge and support to schools. As a result, the authority’s drive to raise standards at key stage 3 has been successful whilst achievement at key stages 1 and 2 continues to be outstanding. The quality of education continues to be high in most of Newport’s schools.

98 Overall, inspection findings in Newport schools are the best in Wales. The following table shows the inspection grades for schools inspected in Newport during the period September 2005 to December 2007.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provider name</th>
<th>KQ1</th>
<th>KQ2</th>
<th>KQ3</th>
<th>KQ4</th>
<th>KQ5</th>
<th>KQ6</th>
<th>KQ7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lliswerry Infant School</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milton Infants School</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monnow Junior School</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durham Road Infant School</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crindau Junior and Infant School</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caerleon Endowed Junior School</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Joseph's RC High School</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caerleon (Lodge Hill) Junior School</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malpas Court Primary School</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Julians Junior School</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Patrick's R.C. Primary School</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kimberley Nursery School</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queen's Hill Pupil Referral Unit</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Close Nursery</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maesglas C.P. School</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mount Pleasant Primary</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millbrook Junior School</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lliswerry High School</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somerton Primary School</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaer Junior School</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Gabriels R.C. Primary School</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bettws High School</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

99 School improvement officers understand clearly how well schools perform. Officers challenge and support schools effectively. School improvement officers promote rigorous target-setting, self evaluation and school development planning through regular meetings with headteachers and, where appropriate, the involvement of governors.

100 Authority managers monitor the work of school improvement officers very well. All visits to schools are recorded on the Newport Education Service Electronic Activity
Record (NESEAR) including time spent, the work undertaken and how the work relates to strategic priorities. Each term, team discussions make sure that the work of the school improvement service is targeted towards supporting those schools that need to improve most. However, the authority has not yet agreed criteria with schools to decide how much additional support schools are entitled to where there are concerns about performance. As a result, schools continue to expect high levels of support from the service regardless of how well they perform.

101 The e-learning and information support team (ELIS) provides a wide range of data to schools. Schools access this data easily through the electronic School Secure\(^\text{18}\) system. School improvement officers evaluate the performance of individual and use a traffic light system in School Secure to highlight areas of concern to schools. However, school improvement officers do not yet make good enough use of data to support schools in evaluating and improving the performance of potentially vulnerable pupil groups including pupils from ethnic minorities or those with additional learning needs.

102 There is increasing integration of the work of school improvement officers and the services supporting inclusion and additional learning. The authority recognises that behaviour, attendance and curriculum options all contribute to the achievement of learners at key stage 4. However, there is not yet a clear and agreed strategy between these services which clearly identifies the contribution all services and schools will make to raising standards at key stage 4.

**Curriculum Support**

103 The quality of support for literacy and numeracy is outstanding. Schools needing support are well targeted in these areas. The quality of training linked with curriculum development is very good and very well regarded by schools. Support in other areas such as Welsh second language, science, music and physical education. is good.

\(^{18}\) Each school has its own individual site to store information and data regarding school performance and notes of visits from officers. Access is restricted to the school and officers.
Curriculum support in the core subjects and basic skills impacts on outcomes for learners

The advisory teams in support of the core subjects are outstanding and recognised as such by the schools.

The numeracy team is very well targeted. It runs an extensive mathematics catch-up programme with carefully documented gains in national curriculum level. It supports schools in maths curriculum and in preparation for Curriculum 2008\textsuperscript{19}. The team works with schools to ease transition from primary to secondary school. This contributes to the marked improvement in outcomes at key stage 3 in which the standard of mathematics is above average for Wales and improving year on year.

The literacy team targets its support well through reading recovery and literacy enhancement groups. Students in these groups improve their reading and national curriculum levels. It also contributes to literacy development in the Welsh-medium primary school. The team promotes curriculum enrichment through oracy, discussion of philosophy with children and by the use of drama in education. Standards in English are above average for Wales in primary school and meet the national average in secondary, which is above expectation based on the level of social deprivation in the authority.

The science team contributes to high standards in science in key stages 1 and 2 and to the marked improvement at key stage 3. It leads work on moderation of teacher assessment via the use of portfolios of pupil’s work.

The authority provides a good range of support for the development of basic skills. Initiatives include reading recovery, literacy acceleration and maths catch up. In each of these areas, attainment is well mapped and outcomes can be clearly seen in terms of progression in reading skills and national curriculum levels. There is very good support for ICT skills in primary schools and good support in secondary. The RAISE\textsuperscript{20} project improves basic skills and the attendance of pupils at risk. All schools, the authority, and community basic skills providers hold the Basic Skills Agency quality mark.

Co-operation between Newport and other former Gwent authorities and with the South East Wales consortium allows a range of good services to be provided that would not otherwise be economic to operate, including the Athrawon Bro, school library service, outdoor education, support in humanities, art, and technology and the music service.

Very good support in the implementation of the key stage 3 strategy has led to dramatic improvement in results in the core subjects. Support for assessment is very good in the core subjects. Transition projects are in operation in all core subjects to ensure effective sharing of information about pupils’ achievements between primary

\textsuperscript{19} The Welsh Assembly Government intends that, from September 2008 there will exist in Wales a single coherent framework for curriculum, assessment and qualifications from 3-19 which will help schools to raise standards of achievement and widen educational opportunity

\textsuperscript{20} The RAISE (Raising Attainment and Individual Standards in Education) grant is additional specific funding for schools to improve educational outcomes for disadvantaged pupils who are underachieving
and secondary schools. Portfolios of pupils’ work help ensure a common understanding of what levels pupils achieve in English, mathematics and science. Work to ensure the consistency of teacher assessment in the core subjects at key stages 1-3 is outstanding. Similar work in the foundation subjects is at an earlier stage. The outcomes for pupils in foundation subjects are more variable and reflect the limited level of curriculum and assessment support available.

106 Support is outstanding for non-maintained nurseries, whilst training and support in preparation for the foundation phase has been good. The work of the Parent Project improves communication with parents and develops parental skills of working with their children. Early years settings maintained by the authority and those run independently get good support and comprehensive training opportunities from the Early Years special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo).

107 A very good range of continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities is easily accessible to teachers, including training provided by neighbouring authorities. These are of high quality and well evaluated to ensure they meet teachers’ needs. Training is available to develop teachers’ Welsh language skills and the Athrawon Bro service provides good support for Welsh as a Second Language. However, there is limited access to curriculum training through the medium of Welsh.

108 There is good progress in planning a wider choice of curriculum for 14-19 year olds. City Venues\(^{21}\) is an exciting development and there is increasing collaboration between schools to increase the range of A levels taught. There is very good co-operation with Coleg Gwent on the 14-19 Learning Pathways. More able learners are able to link with higher education and various employers. The project is also well directed towards those with additional learning needs, disability and disadvantaged backgrounds.

109 School improvement officers have very good links with a wide range of partners, both external and from other services within the authority. These partners help to develop the range of learning opportunities available to pupils. As a result, extracurricular provision and out of schools hours learning is very well provided through the music service, sports and recreation and environmental projects.

\(^{21}\) City Venues is a programme for year 12 students across the city and allows them to spend 20% of curriculum time learning alongside students from other schools in out of school vocational situations.
Work with partners helps to enrich learning opportunities.

The curriculum is enriched by a variety of outstanding activities. These include the music service, which trains some 9,000 pupils in instrumental music and maintains 15 bands, which have a national reputation in music competitions. The service provides musical instruments and tuition, where required, for pupils. It does this on a self-financing basis. In addition, it provides curriculum advice on music, as well as music therapy for pupils with special educational needs. The service operates across the whole of Gwent.

The healthy schools initiative is well supported by schools and is effective in an increasing number of schools in raising pupils awareness of how to live more healthily. The catering service is responsive to developing healthy eating by learners.

Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship has made an impact across an increasing number of schools. The proportion of schools holding “Green Flag” status is higher in Newport than in any other authority in Wales. Recycling initiatives in schools such as the recent Christmas Card collection have been very successful. Many schools are involved in projects to increase biodiversity in the school grounds and to attain the status of Forest Schools.

The authority and its partners have been active in developing sport and recreation. All primary schools participate in Dragon Sport. Good links are in place with sports clubs, and leisure centres. A wide range of activities are offered climbing, mountain biking and skateboarding.

Support for managers and leaders

110 There are good development opportunities for most leaders and managers in schools. The authority promotes national training programmes such as the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) well. As a result, many deputy heads and subject leaders have also achieved the NPQH. New heads are supported well through opportunities to meet together to discuss their work and mentoring. An effective programme of management training for existing and potential heads of department is delivered in secondary schools. There are currently limited development opportunities for existing headteachers but this is being addressed through work with the University of Wales, Newport.

111 The authority supports governors very well. The programme of training is designed in consultation with governors and is broad and informative. Clerks to governing bodies provide good advice and make sure meetings are productive. They provide good quality minutes promptly. Officers analyse governors’ attendance at meetings and training events, which helps officers identify issues early and discuss these with schools.

22 The objective of the Green Flag scheme is to encourage the provision of good quality parks and green spaces managed in environmentally friendly ways.
At present, the overall strategy for services delivering inclusion programmes is ineffective. As a result, services do not work together well enough to raise standards for all children and young people.

Meeting statutory duties and the needs of specific groups of pupils and young people

Officers and elected members work very well together as corporate parents to ensure that children looked-after by the authority receive their full entitlement to education and achieve good standards. The Children and Family Services Service Plan 2007-2008 and the Children First Plan 2006-2007 define a clear and coherent strategy that enables looked-after children (LAC) to make good progress generally. In 2006, 80.8% of looked-after children left school with an approved qualification compared with about 81.9% nationally. A range of effective arrangements are in place to ensure that the corporate role is fulfilled.

 Appropriately, the authority takes a lead role in the Local Safeguarding Children’s Board (LSCB). A Child Protection Officer (CPO), whose post is jointly funded, co-ordinates the education services’ contribution to a good multi-agency system. The CPO has provided a significant link between schools and the Children and Family Services team, as well as between schools and other support services. The CPO ensures schools receive very good guidance and support to develop procedures to protect the well-being of pupils. Extensive and effective training has been provided for staff who work in schools and in early needs settings. At present there is a named person for schools, Children’s Services and others to contact for advice and support on child protection issues. The CPO has put effective communication systems in place to address referrals and concerns regarding referrals. As a result, school referrals have become more accurate and the quality of casework has improved. The CPO has constructed databases and analysed them to identify areas of concern. Analysis is made of referrals and trends and patterns. These are passed on to the Head of Improvement and Inclusion to help inform policy and best use of resources.

There are examples of good and in some cases very good language support for children from minority ethnic groups in some schools. Using data about pupil attainment and achievement to inform practice is at a very early stage of development.

In partnership with the school improvement service, the Gwent Ethnic Minority Support Service (GEMSS) supports all schools across Newport to meet their statutory requirements under The Race Relations Amendment Act 2000. Exemplar policies and guidance on dealing with racist incidents, and respect for diversity, and self-evaluation guidance in the form of the Equalities and Diversities Award have been provided. Schools are well supported in the development of their Race Equality Action Plans. Training provided is generally good to support schools’ understanding of their roles. Also, the authority has provided good quality training related to anti-bullying to all primary and secondary schools in partnership with the Rowntree Foundation.
However, the work of GEMSS is variable in quality. GEMSS has suffered from poor management for a number of years. Staff have not been deployed consistently or effectively. This has been a major cause of frustration for schools as they have not been able to plan continuity in pupils’ learning. In addition, communication and consultation between GEMSS and schools have been weak.

The authority meets the needs of refugee families and asylum seekers effectively. However, there is only limited support for the Gypsy Traveller community.

**Support for attendance at school**

Attendance levels in primary and secondary schools in Newport have been lower than the average for Wales over the last three academic years. Unauthorised absences in primary and secondary are above the Welsh average.

The attendance strategy is not effective and has yet to impact consistently on overall school attendance levels. It has not been able to consistently engage children and young people and encourage them to attend school. This is because there is a lack of whole authority focus and clarity in the work with schools. The authority has a working party reviewing its strategy to help schools improve attendance. The work of the working party is on hold as it is awaiting the findings of an Inclusion Services review into the work of the Education Welfare Officers (EWO) service.

Individual welfare officers offer a good range of help and advice to individual schools, for example, carrying out intervention work to support looked-after children (LAC) at risk of permanent exclusion.

Over the years the EWO service has successfully prosecuted families for not sending their children to school. However, too much service time is spent on a large number of prosecutions. This takes up time that could be better spent improving the attendance of a much larger group of pupils.

### Attendance at school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>Unauthorised absences</td>
<td>Attendance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Newport</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>93.2%</td>
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<td>Wales</td>
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<td>1.7%</td>
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23 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

Support for behaviour in schools

123 The standards of behaviour in schools inspected in the last three years were good. However, the rates for both permanent and fixed term exclusions from secondary schools have been too high over the last three years. However, both permanent and six days or more fixed term exclusions fell in 2005-2006 compared with the previous year. On average, 11.3 days are lost per exclusion of six days or more, one of the highest figures in Wales. This impacts on the continuity of pupils’ learning because there is limited alternative provision during these long fixed-term periods. Local Authority data shows that they have fallen again in 2006-2007.

124 The behaviour support service generally provides good support for low level behaviour problems. This includes good training for schools in the use of circle time and assertive discipline techniques. However, the service offers limited support and advice for pupils who have more challenging behaviour.

Permanent and fixed exclusions from secondary schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Permanent exclusions (rate per 1,000 pupils)</th>
<th>2003-2004</th>
<th>2004-2005</th>
<th>2005-2006</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newport</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.9</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Fixed term five days or fewer (rate per 1,000 pupils)</th>
<th>2003-2004</th>
<th>2004-2005</th>
<th>2005-2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newport</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>104.9</td>
<td>111.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>56.3</td>
<td>69.7</td>
<td>70.7</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
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<td>12.2</td>
<td>11.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

125 The Education Other Than at School Service (EOTAS) provides alternative education for those pupils who are permanently excluded from school or disaffected. EOTAS has worked with schools to develop protocols regarding alternative placements and schools must demonstrate that a referral to the EOTAS service is a last resort. The EOTAS service currently offers full-time education for 81 of the 101 pupils within its service (October 2007 data).

126 There has been positive progress in the last two years in developing the range of provision to support pupils who are at risk of exclusion from school. The authority has resourced the development of three learning support units (LSU) at high schools in which the levels of permanent exclusions were too high. Pupils with challenging behaviour in the classrooms are referred to the LSUs for a short period of time. In the LSUs, staff work on modifying and improving pupils’ behaviour before they return to mainstream classrooms. Staff in these schools have been able to identify problematic behaviour at an earlier stage and address it before pupils reach the point

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of exclusion. In addition, the LSU staff offer advice to teachers in mainstream classrooms on the best ways to deal with challenging behaviour. This has increased the ability of teachers to deal with challenging behaviour.

127 Newport is adopting a policy for ‘managed moves’ for pupils who are at risk of exclusion. The ‘managed move’ system gives pupils who are at risk of being permanently excluded a fresh start in another school. The introduction of managed moves and an improved monitoring system has meant that earlier interventions can be brought about. This approach has also contributed to a reduction in the exclusion rate and had a positive impact on attendance across the city. As a result, there has been a significant reduction in the numbers of pupils being referred to EOTAS. The number of referrals to the service has reduced from 183 in 2005-06 to 144 in 2006-2007.

128 Full-time provision is available to all excluded pupils at key stages 2 and 3 at the Queen’s Hill Pupil Referral Unit. All pupils who attend the PRU return successfully to mainstream schools. Excluded pupils at key stage 4 have individual learning packages that may constitute part-time or full-time education as appropriate to individual pupils. However, not all pupils have access to 25 hours provision and very few of these pupils return to mainstream school.

Additional learning needs (ALN)
Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

129 The authority makes reasonable adjustments so that pupils with disabilities can access mainstream education, either in their local school or in resourced provision, according to their needs and parental preference. A special school provides for pupils who need full time access to a specialist curriculum and additional support such as physiotherapy. The authority has appropriately recognised the need to review provision across Newport and a consultation process is about to commence on the proposals to provide a more inclusive model.

130 Newport has the fourth highest number of statements (1,021) of special educational needs (SEN) in Wales. Of these pupils with statements, 82.8% are educated in mainstream schools or resourced units and classes. As a result, the authority has the fourth highest proportion of statemented pupils taught in mainstream schools in Wales. There is weekly moderation of the requests for statutory assessments and additional resources at a multi-agency SEN panel. Schools have representation on this panel, and the presence of school improvement officers is a good feature as it enables decision-making in the context of the wider management of schools. The inclusion of the local officer for the Special Needs Advisory Panel (SNAP) demonstrates the authority’s willingness to be open and transparent in its decision making processes.

131 The authority has worked effectively, over the past two years, to improve the way it negotiates with parents in reaching agreement about the most appropriate provision for their children. These improvements have enabled the previously unacceptably high numbers of appeals to the Special Educational Needs Tribunal for Wales (SENTW) to reduce significantly. There were 45 appeals registered against the authority in 2005-2006; this number reduced to 24 last year; so far this year there is
just one appeal. This reduction is a reflection of the authority’s change in ethos brought about through the clear vision, sense of purpose and direction for the service by senior officers.

132 Generally, officers in the SEN service, including the recently appointed Parent Partnership Officer, now work well with parents and with the Special Needs Advisory Panel (SNAP)\(^{26}\) to provide parents and carers whose children are going through statutory assessment with good advice and guidance. However, communication with some parents is still not good enough. More could also be done to make sure that parents who are concerned about the progress of their children are made aware of the services of SNAP, even when statutory assessment is not being undertaken.

133 Officers monitor rigorously the progress of pupils with statements who are moving between key stages, those pupils who have full time support, those placed out-of-county, and those where there are specific concerns. The authority has made good progress over the past two years to fulfil the requirements of the SEN and Disability Act (2001). Generally, assessments, statements and annual reviews are completed efficiently and promptly. However, some delays occasionally occur, in particular when educational psychologists do not complete their assessments on time or when the authority does not receive information from other agencies on time. When this happens officers ensure that parents are aware of the delays so that parents and pupils awaiting the outcome of statutory assessment are not kept waiting to hear important information such as school placement and allocation of support staff. In cases when parents and pupils are already anxious about assessment outcomes, these delays cause unacceptable further stress. To address these difficulties the educational psychology service has made good improvements, this year, in the number of assessments completed within the statutory timescale. This is despite the unfilled vacancies within the team.

134 The multi-agency Complex Needs Panel and the Brighter Futures Panel are working effectively to plan and monitor out of county provision. The number of pupils placed in this type of provision has significantly reduced over the past three years: from 47 pupils in 2004-2005 to 37 pupils in 2006-2007. This trend continues to fall, with 31 pupils placed out of county this year. Education and social services departments work well together to meet the needs of vulnerable pupils. They take swift joint action to provide appropriate provision when out of county placements do not meet pupils’ needs well enough. Through good joint work with other agencies, the authority is beginning to develop innovative packages of support to ensure that pupils at risk of having to move from their community can be cared for at home.

135 The reduction in out of county placements has contributed to the much improved control of the SEN budget.

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\(^{26}\) SNAP is a local independent support service who are able to offer advice and support to parents and carers of children going through statutory assessment.
Provision for pupils with additional learning needs

136 A recent external review considered the delivery and management of the SEN and inclusion services and made recommendations for improvement. As a result, the authority appropriately re-structured the way it will deliver services so that they are more efficient and cost-effective. Elected members have agreed to support this restructured model.

137 The authority has a good strategy for meeting the needs of pupils who are more able and talented. This strategy is well linked with curriculum areas and with the authority’s framework for raising standards for all pupils.

138 Specialist teachers, support workers, education inclusion officers and educational psychologists provide schools with good training and support. This work is helping to increase the capacity of mainstream schools to meet pupils’ additional learning needs. However, mainstream class teachers and support staff need more help to improve their understanding of the needs of pupils with ALN and how to identify and support pupils who have social, emotional, behavioural difficulties. The authority is responding appropriately to this need, for example, through the further development of an Emotional Literacy initiative which is to become a whole authority approach. Despite these plans, the present arrangements for early intervention are underdeveloped, and too many children and young people have to wait too long before their needs are recognised. For some pupils this delay contributes to very challenging behaviours and exclusion.

139 The Parent Partnership Officer and educational psychology staff attend monthly multi-agency meetings to discuss pre-school pupils’ needs with parents and other professionals. There is a good joint service between educational psychology and speech therapy services for pupils who have Autistic Spectrum Disorder and their parents, and staff of pre-school and school-age settings. A Portage service provides valuable support and guidance for the families of some disabled pre-school children, but there is only limited joint work between this child health service, the authority and schools.

140 Educational psychologists make assessments when a disabled child is about to start their first school, but the advice is based on statutory requirements and does not always provide schools with enough information to ensure that children transferring into school to settle well. This approach is, in some part, due to the staff shortages and demands upon the service for statutory assessments. It does not allow educational psychologists, and others, to use their expertise well enough. As a result, the arrangements for providing early support and professional advice for disabled pupils and their families, in partnership with other agencies, are not good enough.

141 The authority is making good progress in implementing new criteria for statutory assessment of pupils with additional learning needs. Although this criteria has only recently been introduced, early indicators are that this is already assisting schools’ understanding of their responsibilities for pupils with additional learning needs. The

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27 Portage is a project for providing advice and teaching guidance for parents of early years children who have significant developmental delay.
authority has firm plans to link this revised criteria to the allocation of additional resources, which will help the authority to manage their resources more effectively. In particular, the authority is making clear connections between the allocation of SEN funding and its expectations for pupil outcomes.

142 The SEN budget is well managed, although the authority has not made extensive use of rigorous comparisons of the costs of individual elements of its SEN services with authorities. Last year, for the first time, the SEN budget was not overspent.

143 The Welsh Assembly Government funded initiative ‘Unlocking the Potential’ is helping mainstream schools learn from the skills and expertise of the special school. This initiative is helping the authority to develop the capacity of mainstream schools by improving teachers’ skills in moving and handling of pupils, managing challenging behaviour and supporting early years pupils with communication needs. Another project is currently being developed, in response to highlighted needs, to loan specialist ICT equipment for pupils’ use in schools. The authority monitors well the development and management of these initiatives to ensure they meet identified needs.

144 Overall, inspection evidence from schools on the achievements of pupils with ALN is good.

Access and school organisation
Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Admissions to schools

145 The authority manages the admission of pupils to schools effectively. It consults well with other authorities over admissions that cross over county boundaries. Nearly all parents get their first choice of school for their children. There are relatively low numbers of admission refusals.

146 Information provided to parents is bilingual, transparent, clear and understandable. The authority has established a working group to manage the introduction of an online system which will provide information to parents on school admissions and handle application to schools.

147 The criteria for admissions are clear, with appropriate priority given to looked-after children. The authority has identified that there is insufficient information on school catchment areas available to the public and it is aware that, in some instances, there have been delays in admitting pupils to schools.

Home-to-school transport

148 Generally, the standard of the authority’s home-to-school transport service is good. A recent external review of the service recognised that provision of home-to-school transport meets, and in some cases exceeds, the minimum requirement defined by legislation. Officers work hard to provide high quality services. Overall, schools, pupils and service providers are satisfied with the way the service operates.
149 The home-to-school transport policy and the information provided for parents are clearly written. The authority, in co-operation with four neighbouring authorities and through wide consultation, produced a bilingual Code of Good Practice booklet, which clarifies responsibilities of pupils, parents, schools, escorts, drivers, contractors and the authority.

**Provision of school places**

150 The overall level of unfilled places in schools in Newport is low. The authority has a good track record of taking action to close and amalgamate schools which has resulted in a reduction of unfilled places. In addition, there are further plans to amalgamate infant and junior schools in the city.

151 However there remains a significant\(^{28}\) number of surplus places in over one quarter of schools while others are oversubscribed\(^{29}\). The authority has calculated future growth in the number of pupils, yet the authority’s strategy and plans for meeting this growth and the subsequent demand on school places demand is not yet fully developed.

152 The authority has consulted effectively with all parents, who have children aged up to two years old, to assess the demand for Welsh-medium education. The consultation identified that there was enough demand to create a new Welsh primary school and to create additional capacity in existing schools. As a result, the authority has started planning for a new Welsh school.

**Asset management planning**

153 At a corporate level, asset management planning is well established. However the education service asset management plan requires more detailed information than is currently available about the authority’s educational assets. In addition, the authority has not decided on a definition for ‘fit-for-purpose’ for schools in Newport. The authority estimates that a capital investment of over £260m is needed to ensure that all schools are ‘fit-for-purpose’. At present, uncertainty remains about the source of funding for some of these proposals.

154 The authority has been particularly successful in attracting contributions for new school buildings from property developers. It also plans to use the sale of land to contribute to the rebuilding of two secondary schools. However, up-to-date data about the suitability of all schools is required to prioritise further capital projects across the city.

155 New schools have been designed to a high standard. There has been wide involvement of stakeholders from initial brief design to completion. Capital projects have generally been delivered on time and within budget.

156 A new school condition survey is scheduled for September 2008, which will give the authority up-to-date school condition data, because the last survey was carried out six years ago. Appropriately, the authority has identified the need to review its

\(^{28}\) Significant is used when schools have 25% or more places unfilled.

\(^{29}\) Schools with 10% of pupils more than capacity are described as oversubscribed.
arrangements for forecasting pupil numbers to better inform its planning for school places in the future. This review will be undertaken as a result of undue variations in the accuracy of pupil forecasting data over the last year.

### Support services

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

157 Overall, schools are satisfied with the quality of support services provided by the authority. In the 2007 Audit Commission school perception survey, both primary and secondary schools rated the value for money provided by school improvement services highly while the quality of building maintenance and catering services were rated as poorer quality.

158 All service level agreements (SLAs) provide appropriate details of the support provided, the costs involved and the respective responsibilities of the authority and schools. The take up of SLAs is very high with few schools not signing up to the services offered.

159 The SLA for the advisory support service covers a one year period. It describes the range of services offered and related costs. The SLA allows schools to determine the areas of support accessed. However, schools also receive services which are additional to the SLA agreement such as link visits and targeted support. No details of this additional provision or related costs are provided within the SLA.

160 Support for procurement is good. The authority consistently seeks to gain savings for schools by regular monitoring of supply costs and the re-negotiation of contracts. A range of advice and training in relation to procurement is available to schools.

161 The secondary bursar group and the primary support officer groups provide the authority with feedback on the quality of service to schools. The Schools Improvement and Inclusion Group (SIIG) and the Schools Forum also offer platforms to review the performance of services. However, the authority does not consistently compare service costs and quality with services in other authorities, nor regularly seek user feedback.

### Corporate services for education, including schools

162 There have been significant changes of staffing, management teams and procedures which have resulted in more efficient and transparent services to schools. Such changes have included the adaptation of corporate policies and systems for educational settings and the increased use of on-line information. In general, these developments have worked well and have impacted positively on the work of schools.

### Finance

163 The authority provides schools with financial support that is of high quality. All schools buy in one of the two levels of service offered and they rate highly the advice they receive. Evaluations of training courses for headteachers, bursars and governors are positive. The service has recently introduced budget-modelling
software into schools and is developing benchmark data to enable schools to compare their expenditure on items such as energy. The quality of advice and support is reflected in the financial position of schools. At the end of 2006-2007, schools’ balances had increased slightly to a prudent level of 4.1% of budget. Only two schools carried forward deficits into 2007-2008, and very few carried forward excessive surpluses. Where balances are too high, the authority challenges schools to ensure that there are appropriate plans to make good use of surpluses. Link advisers are aware of those schools about which there are financial concerns and are able to discuss issues with headteachers and governors as part of their routine monitoring visits.

164 Schools process invoices and authorise payments themselves, transferring the information electronically to the authority’s financial system. The authority provides schools with monthly reconciliations which are generally accurate.

165 Finance officers provide very good support to budget holders within the education service. Finance staff meet budget holders each month to compare expenditure to date against the expected pattern, and to identify the reasons for any variance. Senior managers receive regular, plainly written summaries of these meetings, which help them to manage any underspend or overspend effectively and in line with priorities. This careful monitoring and subsequent action have contributed significantly to the regaining of control over the authority’s SEN expenditure.

**Human resources (HR)**

166 HR provides an effective service to schools. Personnel officers have a very good knowledge of personnel issues in education. The responsibilities of schools and the authority are clearly understood by both. Administrative procedures have improved significantly in recent years including increasing use of ICT via the Trent\(^30\) administrative system. This has contributed to a significant reduction in overpayments and emergency payments being made. Schools are able to check administrative details via access to Trent.

167 The recruitment of teachers and support staff is generally satisfactory. The authority’s electronic HR system is currently being set up so that it can track appointment timescales. Casework is well supported with no dismissals reaching a formal industrial tribunal in the last few years. A range of training is offered to school managers and governors, although the attendance at training sessions has varied unduly and some courses have been cancelled. Policies and procedures are regularly updated and increasingly available in electronic format. However, the service needs to further develop its procedures to monitor any changes made so that these can be evaluated effectively.

**Information and communications technology (ICT)**

168 Schools are well supported by the authority’s ICT services. There is an effective strategy in place for the management of pupil performance data, staff and financial information. Links between curriculum and corporate ICT services are very good.

\(^30\) Trent is a HR and Payroll system
169 The ELIS team maintain and provide a wide range of performance data. Schools are kept up-to-date regarding the information that is held. Access to data is made easy for schools though the School Secure system. However, not all available data is analysed or shared with schools and, as a result, opportunities are missed to identify potential issues arising from the data analysis and to celebrate good practice.

170 The Information Systems and Communication (ISandC) team oversee the STEP managed service. This service provides a comprehensive range of support and resources and is highly regarded by schools. SLA costs to schools have reduced compared with previous years and are lower than for other corporate services. Service response and repair times are monitored by the service and are generally good. Good service standards have been recognised by a number of external bodies including British Educational Communities and Technology Agency.

**Property-related services**

171 The scheme for financing property maintenance work clearly sets out school and the authority’s respective responsibilities. The property maintenance SLA clearly defines service provision and procedures. All but one school subscribe to the SLA. If a school wishes to use external property maintenance services, the authority provides advice and model contracts to ensure that the school complies with legislation and gets value for money. There have been a number of successful joint funded projects by schools and the authority to improve school buildings; schools are generally complimentary regarding the quality and completion timescales for building project but are more critical of the quality and costs of maintenance and repair work. Nevertheless, few formal complaints have been received during the last year.

172 Schools perceive the costs of property maintenance as high but rarely have effective comparisons on which to base their judgements. Invoicing for completed work lacks appropriate detail. In addition, where final costs vary from the initial estimates, there is little attempt to indicate the reasons for this. The authority is aware of these shortcomings and has recently developed a range of proposals which incorporate improved procedures.

173 There are appropriate systems for emergency and out of hours call-outs and there is a draft service Emergency Plan in place. There are performance indicators in place for project work. Maintenance and repair work details are logged but not always analysed so as to improve the service provided. The service currently has no local performance indicators against which to monitor and evaluate provision more effectively. However, there is evidence of performance indicators in the new service proposals.

**School meals**

174 During 2007, the school meal service improved:

- relationships with schools;
- the quality of school meals; and
- monitoring and evaluation processes.
174 The service now communicates well with parents through regular newsletters and with pupils through focus groups. Service managers met with schools to identify areas for improvement but this dialogue is not yet regular enough. A new audit process is used to monitor the work of kitchen staff and the quality of school meals but it is too early to judge its impact.

175 The school meal service works well with health services to promote healthy eating. The new Schools Community Dietician and the Schools Community Food worker deliver good quality training for lunchtime supervisors and other school-based staff. This training helps staff to promote healthy eating with pupils. Primary school menus are colour-coded to indicate healthier options and provide a good selection of vegetarian and Halal choices.

176 The take-up numbers of school meals being provided across Newport is falling. Overall the cost of providing the service exceeds the income generated. The cash-free payment system in secondary schools helps to reduce the perceived stigma attached to the receipt of free school meals but take up of meals remains variable.
Findings: Will the local authority’s performance improve?

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

177 The authority’s self-evaluation report is comprehensive and thorough. It provides a balanced picture of strengths and areas for development within the education service and its conclusions agree in most respects with those of the inspection team. The authority has therefore demonstrated its ability to identify what needs to improve. Where necessary, it has engaged consultants to bring an external perspective and to challenge robustly the existing models of service delivery.

178 Since the last inspection in 2004, the effectiveness of consultation and the quality and range of partnership working have improved significantly, in line with the report’s recommendations. Changes at senior management level over the last two years have slowed down progress in restructuring the service, but the process of ensuring that ALN and Inclusion services contribute fully to school improvement is now underway.

**Support for school improvement**
*Grade 1: Improvement prospects are good, with significant improvements already in place*

179 The quality of leadership, at all levels, for school improvement is outstanding. Leaders have a very clear vision and schools hold them in high regard. The authority has made good progress in addressing the recommendations from the last inspection of the school advisory service in 2004. Standards are outstanding and improving at key stages 1 and 2. The strategy to raise standards at key stage 3 has had significant impact.

180 There is now greater awareness of inclusion and ALN issues by school improvement advisors. These areas have been firmly embedded in link advisor agendas. The ambitious review of inclusion and ALN services proposes to further strengthen their links with school improvement to help deliver a strategy to raise standards at key stage 4.

**Promoting social inclusion and well-being**
*Grade 2: Improvement prospects are good, with no major barriers*

181 The authority has effectively used external consultants to undertake a review of inclusion services. The reviews have identified areas of good practice in each service as well as areas of poor performance. The outcomes of the reviews have been well received by headteachers and have the support of elected members. The new structure will make it easier for inclusion services and school improvement to work together to raise achievement and attainment at key stage 4.

182 Services and schools are working together more effectively to manage behaviour in schools. Schools’ awareness and understanding of the roles of different providers
has improved. The increase in the range of provision and more appropriate referrals by schools has led to greater flexibility within the system to ensure that more pupils remain in full-time educational provision.

There are early signs of significant improvement that has led to a reduction in both permanent and fixed period exclusions through early intervention in 2006-2007\textsuperscript{31}.

\textsuperscript{31} This is data from the authority and has not yet been verified by WAG.
Additional learning needs (ALN)
Grade 2: Improvement prospects are good, with no major barriers

184 The authority is making good progress in implementing new criteria for the statutory assessment of pupils with additional learning needs. Although these criteria have only recently been introduced, early indicators are that the criteria are already assisting schools’ understanding of their responsibilities for pupils with additional learning needs.

185 The SEN budget is well managed and was not overspent for the first time last year. The authority has not made extensive use of rigorous comparisons of the costs of individual elements of its SEN services with authorities.

186 Education and social services departments work well together to meet the needs of vulnerable pupils. They take swift joint action to provide appropriate provision when out of county placements do not meet pupils’ needs well enough. Through good joint work with other agencies, the authority is beginning to develop innovative packages of support to ensure that pupils at risk of losing their place in their community can be cared for at home.

Access and school organisation
Grade 3: Some good prospects, but barriers in important areas

187 Access services are generally good. 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 also 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 and a clear authority commitment to provide enough fit for purpose buildings. This has the potential to bring about further improvements. However, as yet there is no clear agreed definition of ‘fit for purpose’ in the Newport context.

188 An important barrier to improvement is that information on school buildings is not up-to-date. Without an up-to-date set of data on condition, suitability and sufficiency of schools, the authority does not have an adequate basis to prioritise reorganisation proposals. Also, uncertainty remains about the source of funding for these proposals and the significant whole-authority estimate of capital needs.

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

189 The management teams within the support services can demonstrate a sound knowledge of operating procedures, recent improvements within these, and a commitment to further improving provision within their areas.

190 Some services have introduced new local performance indicators while others have recognised the need to do so. However, the authority has not yet fully developed:

- procedures by which clients can provide feedback more directly to service managers; and
• ways to compare more effectively costs and the quality of service provision where these are currently lacking.

191 There is evidence of improved communication between the services, schools and other stakeholders in order to address needs more effectively. The re-established School Improvement and Inclusion Group provides an additional and influential channel through which schools are able to express their concerns and provide feedback to the authority.
The authority's response to the report findings

The schools, governing bodies, elected members, officers and partners of Newport City Council’s education service are grateful to the Estyn team members for the thorough and professional manner in which they carried out the inspection. The inspection of the entire provision of an LEA is a rigorous process for all involved. Nevertheless, the process has allowed the service to reflect on its performance and helped it to clarify the future pathway for raising the standards of its services.

The City Council is delighted with the very positive nature of the report which acknowledges the overall good standard of education services within the authority. The fact that outstanding features have been identified in a number of key areas is a particular point of pride for both the education service and the City Council as a whole.

The authority is pleased that the inspection team agreed almost entirely with its self-evaluation report. It is gratifying that both the Council’s strategic planning and the role played by elected members are considered to be good and that senior officers within the education service and at a corporate level provide high quality leadership. This bodes well for setting in place and implementing plans for future improvements.

In the light of the new Children and Young People’s planning process the City Council is happy that the inspection team considers that partnership working is developing well. The fact that there are systematic operational procedures in place together with an agreed strategy will allow the authority and its partners to move forward positively.

The authority agrees with the comments made about each of its services. While it is pleased that the report is overwhelmingly good in nature, the City Council is not complacent and is fully aware of those areas where it needs to improve its provision. It had already started to work out its strategies for addressing the recommendations of the inspection team prior to the report’s publication.

The City Council looks forward to developing and implementing an action plan together with its schools and partners which addresses the recommendations made by the inspection team. It looks forward to working closely with Estyn on the implementation of its post inspection action plan.
## Appendix 1

### The grade profile

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>How good is the local authority’s performance?</th>
<th>Will the local authority’s performance improve?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategic management</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for school improvement</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting social inclusion and well-being</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional learning needs (ALN)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support services</td>
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<th>Key question</th>
<th>1 How effective is the authority’s strategic planning?</th>
<th>2 How effective are the authority’s services?</th>
<th>3 How effective are leadership and management?</th>
<th>4 How well do leaders and managers monitor, evaluate and improve services?</th>
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<td>Strategic management</td>
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<td>Additional learning needs (ALN)</td>
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## Appendix 2

### The inspection team

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Role</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arwyn Thomas HMI</td>
<td>Estyn</td>
<td>Reporting Inspector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan Roberts HMI</td>
<td>Estyn</td>
<td>Team Inspector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huw Lloyd Jones</td>
<td>Wales Audit Office</td>
<td>Team Inspector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jassa Scott HMI</td>
<td>Estyn</td>
<td>Team Inspector</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jeff Loxon</td>
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<td>Mike Newman</td>
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<td>Robert Blewitt</td>
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<td>Ann Rees</td>
<td>Estyn</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heather Loveridge</td>
<td>Flintshire LA</td>
<td>Peer Assessor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Steve Rowland</td>
<td>Newport LA</td>
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