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a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales



WALES AUDIT OFFICE
SWYDDFA ARCHWILIO CYMRU

Quality and standards in education and training in Wales

A report on the quality of

Pembrokeshire Local Authority's Education Services

February 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 programmes.

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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Context

The Inspection

- 1 Local Authority (LA) 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 18 February 2008 to 22 February 2008. The focus of this inspection is on all of Pembrokeshire County Council's education services. Before the inspection, Pembrokeshire local authority undertook a review of its education services and produced a self-evaluation report as a 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 judgments, 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 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.
- 8 Estyn's reports follow its guidance for the writing and editing of reports, which is available on the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.uk). The table below shows the terms that Estyn uses and a broad idea of their meaning. The table is for guidance only.

Nearly all	with very few exceptions
Most	90% or more
Many	70% or more
A majority	over 60%
Half/around half	close to 50%
A minority	below 40%
Few	below 20%
Very few	less than 10%

Background to the authority

- 9 Pembrokeshire County Council is a unitary authority situated on the south-west peninsula of Wales. It is the fifth largest county in Wales covering approximately 1,650 square kilometres, 7.9% of the area of Wales.
- 10 The county is rural with a population density of 714 people per 1000 hectares, about half the Welsh average. Just under half the local population of 117,500 (2005) live in the five main towns of Haverfordwest, Milford Haven, Fishguard, Pembroke and Pembroke Dock. The local authority (LA) states that Pembrokeshire has a disproportionately higher number of residents living in more remote locations than most other Welsh authorities: 26.5% of Pembrokeshire's population (sixth highest in Wales) lives more than five kilometres from a settlement or urban centre with 2,500 or more residents. In Pembrokeshire, there are only two towns of more than 10,000 population and four of more than 5,000. These figures have a close bearing on the number of schools maintained by the authority and its education transport costs.
- 11 The Welsh index of multiple deprivation (2005) ranks seven of the 71 wards in Pembrokeshire within the top quarter. The economy is dominated by the service sector with the principal employers being associated with public administration, education and health. Agriculture and tourism are also major sources of employment. The economy is in a phase of expansion due to the development of liquid natural gas terminals in and around Milford Haven.
- 12 In the 2001 census, 21.5% of the total population of Pembrokeshire were Welsh speaking, with most Welsh speakers living in the north of the county. The south of the county is predominantly English speaking.

School and pupil numbers

- 13 In Pembrokeshire there are:
 - five infant schools;
 - four junior schools;
 - fifty-seven primary schools;
 - eight secondary schools (11-18 age range);
 - one special school; and
 - one pupil referral / behaviour support unit.
- 14 Five of the primary schools are Roman Catholic voluntary-aided and four are Church in Wales voluntary aided. Fourteen primary schools and one secondary school are voluntary controlled.
- 15 The authority recognises that certain areas of the county have distinctive cultural and linguistic traditions. These are taken into account by the authority in evolving an effective language policy for Pembrokeshire. Accordingly, Welsh-medium education

is offered in community schools in the traditionally Welsh-speaking areas in north Pembrokeshire or in designated Welsh-medium school or units in mid and south of the county. The schools are designated by linguistic categories A, B, and C¹. Primary education is available in 11 category A traditional Welsh-medium primary schools, one designated Welsh-medium primary, four category A/C schools in the south of the county and three category A/B schools in urban areas in the north of the county. The authority maintains one bilingual secondary school Ysgol y Preseli and offers a number of subjects through the medium of Welsh at one other secondary school Ysgol Bro Gwaun.

- 16 In September 2007 the total pupil population was 18,270 full-time equivalent (FTE). The primary pupil population has fallen by 8.1% since peaking in 1999. The secondary population increased by 9.5% between 1998 and 2006 and is now declining. Numbers in both primary and secondary sectors are forecast to fall for the foreseeable future, although migration into the authority is beginning to change this.
- 17 Surplus places in primary schools have reduced from 25% in 1996 to 9.5% in 2007. Closures and mergers have resulted in a reduction from 94 to 66 primary schools in total. By 2006 very few (four) schools had significant surplus places (greater than 25% and more than 30 pupils).
- 18 The proportion of statutory school age pupils entitled to free school meals (14.5% in January 2007) is below the average for Wales (17.4%) and ranks Pembrokeshire as the eighth lowest of the 22 Unitary Authorities. In individual Families of Schools² the proportion of FTE pupils entitled to free school meals varies between 8% and 22%.

Organisation of the authority

- 19 Pembrokeshire is an Independent controlled Council with a Cabinet comprising 10 members, including the Leader of the Council. The Cabinet provides leadership and a policy framework for the Council. One of the Cabinet has lead responsibility for Lifelong Learning, Children and Young People, and the Welsh Language.
- 20 There are four Overview and Scrutiny Committees including the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Children and Families.
- 21 The management responsibility for the Council rests with the Chief Executive and the Chief Officers Management Board (COMB). The Board comprises the Chief Executive and five Directors.
- 22 The Council operates on the basis of a strong corporate ethos. Its strategy and principles are outlined in the Corporate and Improvement Plan. The education service works closely with other corporate services. It also has strong relationships with schools, which are based on the clear principle of an 'educational community'. This has been the case since the formation of the unitary authority in 1996.

¹ Category A – schools in the recognised traditional Welsh areas and designated Welsh schools, streams and units. Category B – schools in less Welsh areas and urban areas.
Category C – schools in more English speaking areas.

² Families of Schools are educational communities which aim to raise attainment of learners and improve access to lifelong learning for all. In Pembrokeshire there are eight Families of Schools with the secondary schools being the hub or centre for the primary schools in their catchment areas.

- 23 The Director of Education is the designated lead director for Children's Services. There has been no departmental restructuring in relation to Children's Services. Statutory responsibilities for Social Care and Housing remain with the Director of Social Care and Housing, including child protection procedures.
- 24 The education service has two heads of service. They each manage a distinct but inter-related portfolio of services; one within School Improvement and Inclusion, and the other within Lifelong Learning and Development.

Performance of schools in National Curriculum assessments and public examinations.

- 25 Overall, there is a trend of steady improvement in performance in national curriculum assessments and external examinations in primary and secondary schools.
- 26 At key stage 1 the performance of primary schools in Pembrokeshire was very slightly below the average for Wales in 2005 and above the average in 2006 and 2007. At key stage 2, Pembrokeshire's performance has been more variable. Compared to the rest of Wales Pembrokeshire's rank order between 2000 and 2004 in key stage 2 was fifth, second, fifth and ninth respectively. Since 1997, Pembrokeshire's performance in key stage 2 has dipped to below average only once in 2005. At key stage 3, the performance of secondary schools is consistently above the average for Wales.
- 27 The following tables compares the percentage of pupils in Pembrokeshire that attained the core subject indicator (CSI)³ in National Curriculum teacher assessments in key stages 1, 2 and 3 in the last three years with that of pupils throughout Wales⁴.

Key stage 1	2005	2006	2007
Pembrokeshire	79.9%	81.6%	82.2%
Wales	80.9%	80.6%	80.1%
Rank	13	10	8

Key stage 2	2005	2006	2007
Pembrokeshire	73.9%	77.7%	78.0%
Wales	74.3%	74.2%	74.1%
Rank	14	4	4

Key stage 3	2005	2006	2007
Pembrokeshire	60.4%	59.7%	60.2%
Wales	57.4%	58.2%	56.7%
Rank	7	9	8

- 28 The percentage of pupils attaining five or more A*-C grades at GCSE increased by approximately six percentage points between 2005 and 2007. Results for the last three years have been consistently above the averages for Wales. The percentage

³ The Core Subject Indicator is the percentage of pupils achieving the expected level or above in language (English, or Welsh first language), mathematics and science in combination.

⁴ When performance is compared to all authorities across Wales

of pupils attaining five or more A*-G was below the average for Wales in 2007 but above the average in 2005 and 2006. This is because the authority is now using a greater range of vocational courses that are not always recognised using this performance indicator.

- 29 The following tables compare the performance in Pembrokeshire schools with that of pupils throughout Wales in GCSE and GNVQ examinations

Percentage of pupils who gained 5 or more GCSEs grade A*-C or vocational equivalent	2005	2006	2007
Pembrokeshire	53.4%	58.4%	59.3%
Wales	52.2%	53.8%	54.2%
Rank	9	6	7

Percentage of pupils who gained 5 or more GCSEs grade A*-G or vocational equivalent	2005	2006	2007
Pembrokeshire	86.5%	87.4%	85.6%
Wales	85.2%	86.0%	85.7%
Rank	10	8	13

- 30 At GCE A level, the percentage of pupils attaining two or more A-C grades at Advanced (A) level was below the average for Wales in 2005 and 2007 and above the average in 2006. The percentage of pupils attaining two or more A-E grades has consistently been above the average for Wales over the last three years.
- 31 The following table compares the performance of Pembrokeshire schools with that of pupils throughout Wales in A level performance⁵.

A level performance	2 or more A-C			2 or more A-E		
	2005	2006	2007	2005	2006	2007
Pembrokeshire	67.1%	69.1%	65.9%	94.7%	94.0%	94.6%
Wales	67.6%	68.1%	67.5%	94.4%	93.9%	93.9%
Rank	12	9	13	11	10	= 8

⁵ Source: National Statistics: SDR 102/2005, National Curriculum Assessments 7, 11 and 14 year olds; SDR 130/2006, National Curriculum Assessments 7, 11 and 14 year olds; SDR 145/2007 National Curriculum Assessments 7, 11 and 14 year olds.

- 32 The following tables show the distribution of Pembrokeshire schools within the top and bottom all-Wales Free School Meals Benchmark Quartiles for the Core Subject Indicator at each key stage. At all key stages, there has been a reduction in the numbers of schools performing in the lowest quartile. A reasonable percentage of schools perform well against similar schools in Wales.

Key stage 1

Percentage of schools in:	2005 (66)⁶	2006 (65)	2007 (63)
Highest quartile	15%	23%	22%
Lowest quartile	30%	21%	24%

Key Stage 2

Percentage of schools in	2005 (61)	2006 (61)	2007 (63)
Highest quartile	16%	18%	29%
Lowest quartile	31%	21%	16%

Key stage 3

Percentage of schools in	2005 (8)	2006 (8)	2007 (8)
Highest quartile	25%	25%	25%
Lowest quartile	13%	25%	13%

Key stage 4

Percentage of schools in	2005 (8)	2006 (8)	2007 (8)
Highest quartile	38%	25%	13%
Lowest quartile	13%	38%	13%

- 33 The National Assembly for Wales sets benchmarks for performance, based on the entitlement that pupils have to free school meals, for:

- the percentage attaining the CSI at key stage 3;
- the percentage of pupils who gain five or more A*-C grades at GCSE; and
- the average points score per pupil at GCSE.

- 34 In 2006, Pembrokeshire's performance was slightly below the expected benchmark for the percentage of pupils attaining the CSI at key stage 3 but above expected benchmarks for the percentage of pupils who gain five or more A*-C grades at GCSEs and average points score per pupil.

⁶ Number of schools the data is based upon

- 35 Overall, the outcomes of Estyn inspections in Pembrokeshire schools are good and often very good. The following table shows inspection grades for schools inspected in Pembrokeshire over the period 2005-2007.

Outcomes of Estyn Inspections of Pembrokeshire Schools September 2005-December 2007

	School	KQ1	KQ2	KQ3	KQ4	KQ5	KQ6	KQ7
Pembrokeshire	Cilgerran V.C.P. School	2	2	1	1	1	1	1
Pembrokeshire	Croesgoch C.P. School	2	2	3	1	2	2	2
Pembrokeshire	Fenton C.P.	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
Pembrokeshire	Ysgol Bro Gwaun	3	2	2	2	2	3	2
Pembrokeshire	Hubberston V.C. School	2	2	1	1	2	2	2
Pembrokeshire	Lamphey C.P. School	2	2	2	1	1	1	1
Pembrokeshire	Neyland C.P. Infant & Nursery	2	3	2	2	2	2	2
Pembrokeshire	Neyland Junior C.P. School	2	1	1	1	2	2	1
Pembrokeshire	Orielton C.P. School	2	2	2	2	2	3	2
Pembrokeshire	Pembroke School Ysgol Penfro	3	2	3	2	2	2	2
Pembrokeshire	Pembrokeshire Pupil Referral Service	2	2	2	1	1	1	1
Pembrokeshire	Portfield Special School	1	2	1	1	1	1	2
Pembrokeshire	Puncheston CP School	2	2	1	2	2	2	2
Pembrokeshire	Solva C.P. School	2	2	4	2	3	2	3
Pembrokeshire	St Marks V.A.P. School	3	3	3	2	2	3	2
Pembrokeshire	St Marys V.R.C. School	2	2	2	2	2	3	2
Pembrokeshire	St Teilos V.R.C. School	2	2	2	1	2	2	2
Pembrokeshire	Stepaside C.P. School	2	2	2	1	2	2	1
Pembrokeshire	Tasker-Milward V.C. School	2	2	3	2	2	2	2
Pembrokeshire	Tavernspite C.P. School	2	2	1	2	2	2	2
Pembrokeshire	Tenby Junior Community School	2	2	1	2	1	2	1
Pembrokeshire	Y.G. Maenclochog	2	1	1	1	1	2	1
Pembrokeshire	Y.G. Sirol Haycastle	2	2	1	1	2	2	2
Pembrokeshire	Ysgol Dewi Sant	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Pembrokeshire	Ysgol Ger y Llan V.C. School	2	2	1	1	1	2	1
Pembrokeshire	Ysgol Glannau Gwaun	2	3	2	2	2	2	3
Pembrokeshire	Ysgol Gynradd Brynconin	3	3	3	3	3	3	2
Pembrokeshire	Ysgol Gynradd Llandudoch	2	2	1	2	2	2	1
Pembrokeshire	Ysgol Gynradd Sirol Wdig	4	2	2	2	2	2	2
Pembrokeshire	Ysgol Llanychlwydog	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Pembrokeshire	Ysgol Y Frenni	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Pembrokeshire	Hakin Infants and Nursery School	2	2	1	1	2	2	1
Pembrokeshire	Ysgol Gynradd Eglwysrwr	2	2	1	1	2	2	2

Key to colours and numbers

1 Good with outstanding features	2 Good features and no major shortcomings	3 Good features outweigh shortcomings	4 Some good features but shortcomings in important areas
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Funding

- 36 The Welsh Assembly Government's Standard Spending Assessment (SSA)⁷ per head of population for Pembrokeshire Council is well above the average for local authorities in Wales. Within this, the education component (education Indicator-Based Assessment (IBA)⁸ amounts to £83.85 million for 2007-2008. This translates to £4,453 per pupil compared to the Wales average of £4,340 per pupil, making it the ninth highest in Wales. The comparatively high level of the education IBA reflects the fact that much of the population in Pembrokeshire lives in small, rural communities.
- 37 Pembrokeshire Council has regularly set budgets for managing and delivering its services at a level just below SSA, and in the current year it has set a budget which is 5% below the SSA. However, the proportion of the SSA used for the education budget this year has been significantly increased, making it now the ninth highest in Wales compared with between 11th and 13th over the previous three years. The council delegates a higher proportion of its education budgets to schools than the average for Wales, which results in primary individual school budgets (£3,529 per pupil) being the second highest, and secondary individual school budgets (£4,094 per pupil) being the third highest in Wales.

⁷ SSA is the means by which the Welsh Assembly Government distributes Revenue Support Grant to local authorities.

⁸ 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.

Summary

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

Strategic management

- 38 Strategic management is good with outstanding features. The authority benefits from great stability in terms of the length of time that very competent senior officers have been in post and in its membership of the Council. This has allowed a consistency in strategic policy during a decade of national change. This stability has enabled the development of very good professional relationships at all levels between officers and elected members and external partners. This has allowed services to develop and changes to be implemented where and when appropriate, for example, in school rationalisation plans. In addition, the stability has provided an opportunity for elected members and officers of the LA to contribute effectively to the authority's vision of an educational community fit for the twenty-first century.
- 39 Elected members are committed to making the changes needed in education. They are very well informed about educational issues. Most members take an active leadership role in schools as members or chairpersons of governing bodies. The Council Leader is the Welsh Local Government Association (WGLA) spokesman for education; the Cabinet Member for Lifelong Learning, Children and Young People and the Welsh Language is the WGLA deputy spokesperson. The latest Wales Audit Office and Estyn perception survey of schools judges the work of the elected members as being in the top quartile, namely, as good as the best in Wales for the effectiveness of their leadership.
- 40 The authority's strategic planning is very good. It has clear policies and well-stated aims that address the relevant national and local priorities. The authority robustly targets its resources at educational priorities. Business planning and budget monitoring are central to the work of the authority and are key to driving forward improvements in its education services. Business planning is outstanding in that it effectively links priorities to performance targets and to costings, all of which are benchmarked. The Council uses these business plans to derive its annual and medium term budget plans in an effective manner. Furthermore, all business plans are scrutinised by the COMB which means they are corporately owned. These factors enable elected members to make budget decisions in a timely and transparent manner. The Council has consistently improved the level of resources, both revenue and capital, available for education.

- 41 The authority takes account of audits and external reviews. It consults regularly with its customers, particularly schools, holds frequent inter-departmental Council meetings and meets regularly with key external partners to discuss changing service needs. Partnership planning and operational working between the authority and other stakeholders such as social care and the Local Health Board has a high priority in meeting the requirements of the Children Plan. Although there are some good examples of effective multi-agency working, there are inconsistencies in the quality of arrangements for joint working, particularly with health and social services.
- 42 Appropriate measures are in place for planning and developing better governance arrangements to improve partnership working.
- 43 The Council discusses all major education policies and considers corporate and inter-agency implications. All key policies have developed from the original strategic vision for the authority set out in Service Delivery Plans, which were approved by the Council in 1996. The Corporate and Improvement Plan sets out the authority's values and vision for the next 12 months and shows how they intend to meet their long-term strategic objectives. Outcomes as measured through the Wales Audit Office (WAO) survey of local authorities have been amongst the best in Wales for asset management, addressing access issues and school places, promoting inclusion and meeting the needs of pupils with additional learning needs. All of the key areas have seen continuous improvement over recent years as measured through the schools' perception survey.
- 44 Overall, the arrangements for performance management are good. However, target setting can be further improved, by linking for example, service targets closer to the performance management targets of individuals.
- 45 Value for money is good. All benchmarks show that Pembrokeshire is well placed against other Councils. In particular, for 2007/2008, Pembrokeshire had the lowest Band D council tax rate in Wales, and most service performance is good or better. Mechanisms such as procurement, financial monitoring, financial control and budget planning are all being used rigorously and, in some cases, imaginatively to get the most out of the council's resources.
- 46 The self-evaluation report produced for the inspection is comprehensive, detailed and, for the most part, evaluative. It clearly identifies strengths and areas that need to be improved. The report is produced in an electronic format which makes it easily accessible for officers and members alike. It has very good potential to drive further improvement in the authority's service delivery through systematic and regular updating.

Support for school improvement

- 47 School improvement is a very high priority for the Council. This is reflected in the Council's willingness to ensure that financial resources are appropriately targeted to school improvement initiatives. School improvement programmes have been successful and have had an impact on raising standards in schools
- 48 The authority has created a culture of self improvement amongst its schools. Schools are willing and committed to seeking ways to improve and want to be challenged by the authority. Supported self-review in primary schools has improved

schools' skills in self-evaluation while also acting as an early alert for the authority when issues arise. In secondary schools, the process is less formal, but individual officers work with schools to develop the skills of school leaders and managers so that they have increased capacity to evaluate their school's performance.

- 49 School development advisers (SDA) know their schools well and offer high levels of support and guidance. Good use is made of data in most instances to challenge and intervene in schools experiencing difficulties, and to target support where it is most needed. However, the protocol used to allocate support and the level of intervention in schools is not always well understood by headteachers, particularly in the authority's secondary schools.
- 50 Overall the quality of curriculum support and training is good, resulting in a measurable impact upon individual schools. There is a good range of support for basic skills, including programmes that are targeted at boys' underachievement. The quality of curriculum support for information and communications technology (ICT), Welsh first and second language and the Foundation Phase is very good. The authority is working in partnership with adjacent authorities to enhance the breadth of its current curriculum provision.
- 51 Extra-curricular provision and out-of-schools hours learning is outstanding. The authority successfully promotes pupils' well-being through a wide range of activities that meet the needs of its learners. Some examples are:
- the music service which provides an exceptional range of opportunities for pupils to participate in instrumental music;
 - innovative and interesting sports development projects that encourage high levels of participation in sports clubs; and
 - clubs such as Cook-It and Computers for Girls which encourage good participation amongst targeted groups of pupils.
- 52 The authority provides good support for leaders and managers through its commitment to developing leadership at all levels. This is clearly demonstrated by:
- the development of leadership skills of headteachers and senior managers by SDA who work constructively with their schools;
 - the provision of accredited leadership training for middle managers;
 - opportunities for clear career progression for Learning Support Assistants; and
 - good quality governor training that builds the confidence of governors to challenge headteachers and senior managers more rigorously about the attainment of pupils.

Promoting social inclusion and well-being

- 53 The local authority provides a good variety of targeted support to help all pupils achieve good outcomes and remain in school. In particular, there is good support for looked-after children and pupils from the Gypsy Traveller community. However, data

is not used well enough to monitor the performance of ethnic minority pupils and to target support where it is most needed.

- 54 There is a good focus on preventative work with children and young people to support their well-being. The authority provides effective early support for behaviour and learning through nurture groups. In addition, the authority co-ordinates support for vulnerable pupils and their families well through the Children in Need project. The local authority and Careers Wales have improved information-sharing arrangements and, as a result, pupils who are at risk of not being in any form of education, employment or training are tracked well. The local authority education services are beginning to contribute more effectively to the work of the Youth Offending Team (YOT) following the critical inspection in 2007.
- 55 The local authority has a well co-ordinated system of support and provision between the behaviour support service and schools to help prevent pupils becoming excluded from school. As a result, permanent exclusions are very low and fixed term exclusions are reducing. The Behaviour Support Service co-ordinates the PRIDE⁹ vocational programme well to provide young people aged 14-16, with a good range of learning opportunities.
- 56 The Pupil Support Service has a strong partnership with schools and other partners in order to address poor attendance. Attendance in primary and secondary schools is above the Wales average. Targeted support for secondary schools with poor attendance resulted in secondary school attendance improving in 2007.
- 57 Many of these good features of inclusion services are recent developments. Overall, they have led to improved co-ordination of services and better targeting of resources towards children and young people at risk of exclusion. However, it is too early to judge the impact of many of these developments on outcomes for children and young people.

Additional Learning Needs (ALN)

- 58 There has been a good improvement in outcomes for pupils with ALN over the last three years.
- 59 The authority makes very good provision for pre-school and school-age children and young people with additional learning needs (ALN). Specialist teams work effectively with other agencies. In addition, the teams work closely with external agencies to raise standards and to promote the successful inclusion of pupils with hearing, vision, medical, communication, learning and behavioural needs. These learners achieve good standards in mainstream schools, attached specialist units, the special school and the pupil referral unit.
- 60 The authority's strategic approach to making provision for pupils with ALN is outstanding. Provision for learners with ALN is an integral part of the authority's inclusion strategy. The outstanding features that have driven improvement are:
- a high level of delegation of funding to schools, guaranteed for three year periods, at an appropriate level to meet the additional learning needs of pupils;

⁹ PRIDE is a full-time vocational programme for up to 70 14-16 year olds.

- a very significant reduction in the number of statements and more time for educational psychologists to work with staff, pupils and parents;
- readily available, high quality advice and support from the learning support service;
- a comprehensive training programme for teachers and learning support assistants, often leading to specialist and accredited qualifications; and
- effective monitoring of outcomes at all levels.

- 61 The strategy for ALN has increased the capacity and capability of mainstream schools to meet the individual needs of their pupils with ALN. As a result, the quality of provision and outcomes for pupils with ALN has improved because the authority has given schools the resources, skills and flexibility to tailor provision to the learning needs of individual pupils.
- 62 There is a range of partnerships between education, social and health services that have improved services for pupils with ALN, including speech and language therapy and physical development. Although, there are some good examples of effective multi-agency working, there are inconsistencies in the quality of arrangements for joint working, particularly with health and social services. In particular, there is not enough support for pupils with complex emotional problems even though the authority has multi-agency referral systems with social services and health professionals to provide an integrated approach to the education and care of young people.
- 63 The proportion of pupils with statements has reduced since 2003 and is now, at 2.36%, below the Welsh average of 3.15%. This figure represents the sixth lowest in Wales. Over the same period of time, the authority has more than halved the annual number of new statements.
- 64 The authority educates effectively a significantly higher than average proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs (SEN) in mainstream schools and classes and a correspondingly lower proportion in special classes or units and the special school.
- 65 There are plans to use data further to fine tune the targeting of services where they are most needed and to track the progress of individual pupils over time. Although business planning for ALN is good, there is no ALN service or improvement plan with the necessary level of detail for monitoring the impact of services and for performance management.

Access and school places

- 66 Officers and members have made very difficult decisions about the closure and amalgamation of schools in the interest of learners. The authority has been very successful in significantly reducing the number of surplus places in primary schools. The rationalisation of schools is linked extremely well with other priorities for education such as the development of community focused schools and improving the quality of the learning environment for pupils. There is widespread support in schools for the authority's strategy.

- 67 The authority has an effective system for forecasting the number of pupils in secondary schools. In recent years, the method used in the primary phase has generally given satisfactory outcomes that underestimated the actual figures by around 2%. For 2008, however, the results underestimate actual figures by over 4%. The authority moved quickly to try to identify possible reasons for this discrepancy, which may lead to revision of the forecasting system for the primary phase.
- 68 The authority has high-quality and regularly updated information on the condition, sufficiency and suitability of school building stock. This information is used very effectively to inform planning for capital investments and for maintenance. The authority has used a range of innovative means to increase available capital. In addition, revenue savings from the school rationalisation programme are reinvested into education priorities. Overall, the authority has made very good progress in improving the quality of the building stock.
- 69 The authority manages admissions effectively. Almost all parents secure a place for their children in their preferred school. Surveys of samples of parents' views of admissions procedures show high levels of satisfaction.
- 70 The Council manages the provision of home-to-school transport effectively. Good efforts are made to minimise costs within the authority's policy.

Support services

- 71 Pembrokeshire has a mature approach to trading with schools, who, in turn, rate the performance of the majority of services as being in the top quarter or best in class when compared with other authorities across England and Wales. Below average costs matched by generally above average performance demonstrates good value for money.
- 72 The authority supports schools well to monitor their own budgets. Budget management is sound although too many primary schools, in particular, have large balances. The Schools' Forum is particularly active and supportive, and has agreed that claw-back of excess balances will start in the new financial year.
- 73 The provision of personnel and payroll support for schools is good and schools in Pembrokeshire give these services the highest rating on the WAO and Estyn perception survey in England and Wales. Casework is well-supported and advice is technically reliable, with a small bespoke team having valued, personal contact with schools. This has been especially valued over recent years as significant primary school rationalisation has taken place.
- 74 ICT services are efficient. There is an effective Council strategy in place for the management and use of pupil performance data and staff, premises and financial information.
- 75 Property-related services are satisfactory overall, and the approach to property maintenance enables schools to get good value for money from their property-related budgets. However, the Council is reviewing grounds maintenance and cleaning whose performance, although judged satisfactory by schools, is below expectation.

- 76 The school meals service is of very good quality and rated one of the best in England and Wales by schools. The healthy schools agenda is being supported by the service, although this has reduced the available income due to a dip in the take-up of the new healthier menus and the abolishment of vending machines for selling fizzy drinks and sweets. Robust steps are in place to rectify this. These steps include the appointment of a business manager for the service and a food and healthy lifestyles promoter, with responsibility for further developing a marketing strategy for the service.

Recommendations

- 77 In order to build upon the existing good work the local authority should:
- R1 continue to develop formal governance arrangements for partnership working with other local authority departments and external providers to meet the needs of the Children and Young People's Plan, including the 14-19 Learning Pathways;
 - R2 ensure that there is consistent and appropriate challenge to schools to further improve standards;
 - R3 improve further the use of data and quality of planning at service team level to refine priorities and ensure targeting of support where needed most;
 - R4 refine self-assessment to be more consistently evaluative for all departments and at all levels within the service;
 - R5 review primary pupils forecasting methodology; and
 - R6 ensure that recent developments to promote inclusion are embedded and evaluated.

Findings: How good is the authority's performance?

Strategic management

Grade1: Good with outstanding features

Leadership

- 78 Strategic management is good with outstanding features.

Outstanding features in the strategic management of Pembrokeshire local authority education service

The authority benefits from a high degree of stability in terms of the length of time that competent senior officers have been in post and in its membership of the Council. This stability coupled with very effective leadership and management has allowed a consistency in strategic policy during a decade of national change. This stability has enabled the development of very good professional relationships at all levels between officers and elected members and external partners, allowing services to develop and changes to be implemented. It has also provided an opportunity for everyone who is committed to achieving high quality education in Pembrokeshire to contribute their views to the authority's vision of an educational community fit for the twenty-first century.

Senior leaders in the council's executive are instrumental in guiding the organisation to its current strong position and are very well informed about the work of the education service both at strategic and operational level. They have a very simple but powerful philosophy of enabling things to get done by having corporate ownership and clear lines of accountability, enabling officers to get on with their jobs.

In the education service, managerial leadership and management are very good. The senior management team (SMT) are experienced, able, and work both collaboratively and strategically. They have a keen sense of purpose, with an astute understanding of barriers to improvement, and how and when they are best tackled. The trust they have in each other is in large part responsible for the trust other stakeholders clearly have in them.

Strategic planning

- 79 The authority's strategic planning is very good. It has clear policies and stated aims that address the relevant national and local priorities. Resources are robustly targeted at priorities. Business planning and budget monitoring are central to the work of the authority and are key to driving forward improvements in its education services.

Business planning as a driver for improvement

Business plans are exceptional in that they effectively link priorities to performance targets to costings, all of which are benchmarked. The Council uses these plans to derive its annual and medium term budget plans in an effective manner.

Furthermore, all business plans are scrutinised by the COMB which means they are corporately owned. The senior finance officers have effectively embedded sound financial planning, monitoring and control principles in the running of the education service. All of these factors enable elected members to make budget decisions in a timely and transparent manner.

The council has consistently improved the level of resources, both revenue and capital, available for education. Over the last three years the education revenue budget per pupil has increased by 23% such that Pembrokeshire is now ninth highest in Wales, from 13th. These increases are based upon a clear rationale arising from sound analysis of need and prioritisation of service delivery.

- 80 The authority takes account of audits and external reviews. It consults regularly with its customers, particularly schools, holds frequent inter-departmental council meetings and meets regularly with key external partners to discuss changing service needs. Partnership planning and operational working between the authority and other stakeholders such as social care and the Local Health Board have a high priority in meeting the challenges of the Children Plan. Although there are some good examples of effective multi-agency working, at present there are inconsistencies in the quality of arrangements for joint working, particularly with health and social services. The Director of Education is also the lead director for Children's Services with overall responsibility for planning and developing better governance arrangements to improve partnership working.
- 81 Elected members are committed to making the changes that are needed in education. They are very well informed about educational issues in the authority. The Council Leader and the Cabinet Member for Lifelong Learning, Children, Young People and the Welsh Language have a national profile; the Leader is the WLGA spokesperson for education, and the Cabinet Member is the deputy spokesperson.
- 82 Elected members also take active leadership roles in schools so that 55 out of 60 of elected members (92%) are school governors. Of these 55, 31 (56%) serve on two governing bodies and seven are chairs of governors. The latest WAO and Estyn perception survey of schools judges the work of the elected members to be in the top quarter for the effectiveness of their leadership. All major education policies go through Council, where corporate and inter-agency implications are considered. All key policies have developed from the original strategic vision for the authority as detailed in the Service Delivery Plans of 1996 and approved by Council. The Corporate & Improvement Plan sets out this vision and indicates how it is to be achieved. Outcomes have been amongst the best in Wales for asset management, addressing access issues and school places, promoting inclusion and meeting the needs of pupils with additional learning needs. All of the key areas have seen continuous improvement over recent years.

- 83 Pembrokeshire County Council as the local authority has a strong track record of successfully allocating resources to priorities. The Council has consistently improved the level of resources, both revenue and capital available for education. A key priority since 1996 has been to improve the school building stock. Capital spend has increased year on year maintaining Pembrokeshire's comparatively high spending position.
- 84 The majority of the increased revenue has been delegated to schools, by agreement, in order for them to make decisions at school level. The net result is that primary schools have the second highest, and secondary schools have the third highest delegated budgets per pupil in Wales. One key factor in this has been the planned and phased delegation of significant amounts of money to enable schools to make suitable provision for pupils with ALN. Similarly, the significant amounts of capital accessed by the service are having a profound effect on the school building stock. Although there is still much to do, the Council can rightly be proud of how it has tackled this issue, which continues to be high priority.
- 85 The very good corporate business planning process is the foundation upon which resources continue to be robustly targeted at priorities. Business plans are exceptional in that they effectively link priorities to performance targets to costings, all of which are benchmarked. The Council uses these plans to derive its annual and medium term budget plans in an effective manner. Furthermore, all business plans are scrutinised by the COMB which means they are corporately owned. These factors enable elected members to make budget decisions in a timely and transparent manner.
- 86 Given that the overriding philosophy is the delegation of resources to schools, spending on centrally-provided services is consequently modest and generally at or near the Wales average. Transport costs are understandably high, but are increasing at less than inflation, and higher than average access costs reflect the high degree of activity in the area of school rationalisation. However, strategic management costs are below average, as are education welfare, both areas where modest capacity has not impeded successful operation. Business plans invite service heads to suggest 'invest to save' ideas where possible, and many have been implemented. One of many examples is the recruitment and training of a cadre of foster carers who can provide for the special needs of those children previously sent to very expensive settings out of county. Overall, Pembrokeshire education service offers good value for money, with average to below average costs, and generally above average outcomes.

Partnerships

- 87 The local authority works well with a range of partners to drive forward key priorities including 14-19 Learning Pathways, Flying Start and the Children in Need initiative. There has been widespread involvement to produce the draft Children and Young People's Plan on time, ready for further consultation.
- 88 Schools, the college of further education and the local authority collaborate well through the Haverfordwest federation. As a result, pupils in the Haverfordwest area have access to a wider range of post-16 options than would otherwise be the case, with 116 pupils accessing at least one option through another institution during

2007-2008. There is good ongoing consultation with pupils to review the effectiveness of the joint provision. However, this level of collaboration does not happen in all areas of the county and pupils in some schools are not able to access easily the same range of post 16 options.

- 89 The families of schools model is a useful platform on which to build multi-agency projects for children and young people. The Children in Need project and joint work to develop speech and language services help to increase the range of services and support available within each family of schools. There are many good examples of schools being the hub for lifelong learning in a community.
- 90 The local authority is working more closely with other local authorities within the region through the South West and Mid Wales Consortium (SWAMWAC). Regional collaboration is starting to rationalise provision of CPD opportunities. However, the local authority does not yet jointly provide any other education services with other local authorities.
- 91 Relationships between the local authority and schools are very strong and are built on high levels of trust and effective communication. This partnership helps to successfully drive forward new developments and allows the local authority and its schools to make difficult decisions together for the benefit of all learners.

Performance management and self-evaluation

- 92 Performance management arrangements are good overall. The performance management system is flexible and continues to develop according to identified needs, for example, changes to the timing of appraisal to better align with business planning. There are good systems in place for data collection and analysis and sharing data with key stakeholders such as heads, finance officers, local authority officers and governors. There is however, room to improve further on target setting by linking for example, service targets more closely to the performance management targets of individuals.
- 93 The self-evaluation report produced for the inspection is comprehensive, detailed and for the most part evaluative. It clearly identifies strengths and areas that need to be improved. The report is produced in an electronic format which makes it easily accessible for officers and members alike. It has very good potential to drive further improvement in the delivery of services within the authority.

Support for school improvement

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

- 94 The authority has a clear strategy for school improvement. This is well understood by all its schools. The head of service effectively leads the school improvement service. It comprises of five school development advisers (three for primary schools, one for secondary schools and one for Inclusion), four advisers with specific responsibility for early years education, ICT, basic skills and CPD respectively, advisory teachers for ICT, early years and Welsh and associate advisers. Associate advisers are usually serving teachers or headteachers who work for a set number of days each term identifying CPD needs and supporting curriculum development. A Change Manager leads on 14-19 developments and Learning Pathways.

Support, monitoring, challenge and intervention

- 95 Officers have a good understanding of how well Pembrokeshire schools are performing. School Development Advisers work well with schools to identify performance trends within individual schools and across families of schools and to help schools use this information to plan for improvement. Overviews of whole authority performance data have led to effective support for schools in raising standards in curriculum areas such as ICT. The secondary improvement initiative has made an important contribution to raising standards in key stage 4.
- 96 Overall, the outcomes of Estyn Section 28 inspections in Pembrokeshire schools are good and often very good. The table in Section 2 of this report, 'Background to the authority', shows inspection grades for schools inspected in Pembrokeshire over the period 2005-2007.
- 97 School development advisers undertake a regular programme of monitoring visits to schools. Through these visits and attendance at governor body meetings they gather good intelligence about their schools. This has meant that the authority has been able to respond quickly to any concerns and provide support for improvement. Consequently no school has been in serious weakness, requiring significant improvement or in special measures. Regular team meetings of the School Improvement Service (SIS) and joint meetings between SIS and Inclusion ensure that information is regularly shared about schools. This also adds to the authority's knowledge of its schools.
- 98 During the autumn term SDA review each school's performance and negotiate appropriate targets for future performance. In subsequent visits, the focus is on how performance data is used effectively to inform school priorities and what support, if any, schools require to meet these priorities. School development advisers write detailed monitoring reports following each visit and share these with school governors at termly meetings. School development advisers are sometimes too ready to accept what headteachers tell them about school progress without challenging schools to provide first hand evidence of improvement. School development advisers do not yet make enough use of data to monitor and evaluate the performance of vulnerable children and young people.
- 99 Overall the authority targets its resources well to improve schools that do less well than others in the authority and succeeds in bringing about improvement. However targeting of schools that do less well compared to similar schools elsewhere in Wales is less rigorous. While there is a protocol for intervention in schools that clearly outlines triggers for intervention and what support schools can expect it is not always well understood, particularly by secondary schools.

Curriculum support

- 100 The authority provides a good programme of continuing CPD opportunities for schools. Good use is made of expertise within the authority and of external consultants to provide support in curriculum areas of national and local importance. Good quality training is commissioned but the impact of this training on standards of achievement is not always monitored or evaluated sufficiently. Partnership working with other adjacent authorities is improving the range of training that can be offered to schools.

- 101 There is good support for and take-up of basic skills projects. All schools have achieved the Basic Skills Quality Mark Award. Learning support assistants (LSAs) are used well to support projects. These projects are monitored and evaluated carefully and the majority of pupils make good progress.
- 102 The authority has used effectively a range of performance, prior attainment and inspection data to target areas of curriculum weakness such as ICT, basic skills and gender differences. In each instance, improvements have been brought about in pupils' standards. Science has recently been identified as an area for development at key stage 4 and the authority has recently worked with external consultants to identify ways of improving the subject.
- 103 Extra-curricular provision and out of schools hours learning (OSHL) are very well provided through the music service, sports and recreation, the healthy schools project, support for schools councils, provision for more able and talented pupils and the sustainable schools award project. These projects are very well co-ordinated and extend the learning opportunities for pupils. Innovative projects such as Cook it and Computers for Girls successfully engage learners. Good links with Pembrokeshire College provides after-school and Saturday Engineering Clubs and Darwin Science to promote extra-curricular science in the primary school.
- 104 The Foundation Phase is very well supported. All early years teachers have been trained in the new ways of working. Headteachers and governors have been provided with good practical support in preparing for the Foundation Phase implementation.
- 105 Good support for schools in the implementation of the key stage 3 strategy has led to improvement in the results of pupils at 14 years of age in the core subjects. As pupils move from key stage 3 to key stage 4 this strategy is beginning to impact although not yet to the same degree.
- 106 Support for assessment is developing in all subjects, and particularly in the core subjects. Associate advisers work constructively with subject leaders and individual schools in producing well-researched portfolios of pupils' work which are moderated between each school.
- 107 Personal and Social Education (PSE) is a strong feature of curriculum provision. Initiatives are well-co-ordinated and strong links are made with initiatives, such as anti-bullying. The PSE work is strengthened by the emphasis on pupil self-reliance in the school councils. The role of counsellors within secondary schools is positively addressing the needs of pupils through providing timely help and support when difficulties arise.
- 108 Good progress is currently underway in planning for improvement in the learning pathways for 14-19 year olds. There is increasing collaboration between schools to increase the range of A-levels taught as well as a good range of 14-16 vocational provision. Headteachers see the geographical dispersion of the area as a limitation on co-operation but there are a number of initiatives, including video conferencing that seek to overcome this.
- 109 The local authority is very proactive in promoting pupils' overall well-being. There is a wide range of very effective support in developing whole school approaches to

health and environmental issues. The Healthy Schools Initiative is well supported and is operating in all schools. Buzz Clubs and their associated activities provide stimulus for the more able and talented learners.

Support for managers and leaders

- 110 The authority is committed to developing leadership skills at differing levels within its schools. It does this through a range of different strategies including:
- School Development Advisers working constructively with headteachers and senior managers in their link schools to develop self-evaluation;
 - effective support for the national programmes for school leaders and aspiring leaders;
 - good induction to headship and support for newly qualified headteachers;
 - encouraging aspiring deputy headteachers and middle managers to access an accredited middle managers course;
 - identifying good practitioners to support and develop curriculum networks;
 - using the family of schools model to provide developmental opportunities for teachers; and
 - actively encouraging LSAs to seek additional qualifications, including foundation degrees through the partnership with Trinity College, Carmarthen.
- 111 The authority supports governors well. The governor training programme is broad and informative. Bespoke training for school self-evaluation in the primary sector is particularly useful in making governors aware of their responsibilities as critical friends. Regular briefing notes for governors make sure they are kept up-to-date. Good quality governor training is building the confidence of governors to challenge head teachers and senior managers more rigorously about the attainment of pupils.

<p>Promoting social inclusion and well-being Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings</p>

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

- 112 Overall, the local authority provides a good variety of targeted support to help all pupils achieve good outcomes and remain in school. The support for pupils from the Gypsy Traveller community through the Priory Project¹⁰ is particularly successful and is an outstanding feature in meeting the needs of pupils and young people. A number of pupils from the project progress into further and higher education. In addition, the Priory Project very effectively promotes lifelong learning within the Gypsy Traveller community and raises awareness of the cultural aspects of these communities locally and nationally.

¹⁰ The Priory Project is the centre for Gypsy Traveller education in Pembrokeshire.

The Priory Project to promote inclusion and lifelong learning

Inclusion is the main driving force for the Priory Project based in one of the authority's community focused primary schools¹¹. The project aims to encourage Gypsy Travellers to participate as full members of the community, to reduce historical barriers between the Gypsy community and police officers, and to encourage the development of representative, integrated groups within communities. One Gypsy Traveller is a member of the school's board of governors. The school acts as a conduit in helping the Gypsy Traveller community to establish trust with local agencies. It acts as an advocacy service on a range of issues, and encourages participation in the democratic process. By these means, the school aims to integrate the Gypsy Travellers into the mainstream life of their community and to provide continuity of education for their children, helping them to gain nationally-recognised qualifications and to enter into employment.

Innovative use of a number of capital grants has enabled the authority to develop the Priory Centre, a new building providing purpose built facilities for young Gypsy Travellers, the school and the local community. In the last two years, the authority and the school have worked in partnership to develop Springboard, a community learning project. This project uses a number of revenue streams, including Communities First, to provide a wide range of informal and formal learning opportunities to encourage local adults to re-engage in learning. This sharing of funding and resources has also enabled the school to adapt and equip rooms in the junior department to provide a dedicated community learning space for this project, equipped with computer facilities, a kitchen and a multi-use learning area. The project aims to provide a range of opportunities for local adults to engage in learning. In the summer term 2007, for example, 146 adults enrolled for a wide range of courses that included literacy; family numeracy; ICT; Welsh for beginners; driving theory; first aid; beauty therapy; and cooking.

The outcomes for these courses have been positive. The retention rate has been running at about 95% and the centre estimates that up to two-thirds of the learners could go on to gain accredited qualifications. In all, 25 Gypsy Traveller adults have enrolled in classes at the project. The centre has achieved considerable success in enabling Gypsy Traveller learners of secondary school age to continue in education at the centre, the local secondary school, and the local further education college and to gain recognised qualifications. It has also enabled some pupils access to higher education and to obtain a degree qualification.

- 113 The local authority works with its partners to provide good bilingual training, advice and guidance for designated teachers and other staff within schools. This helps staff to support looked-after children (LAC) and complete their personal education plans. At key stage 4, LAC and their families receive good additional support through learning mentors. As a result, very few LAC leave school without any qualifications. Officers and elected members work well together as corporate parents to monitor progress of LAC at all key stages. Looked-after children have an opportunity to tell

¹¹ Community focused schools (CFS) are ones that provide a wide range of services for the wider community. The local authority administers a grant to CFS provided by the Welsh Assembly Government to support projects linked to local communities.

the local authority how well they are supported and cared for through the X Forum¹² activity days. However, the local authority does not provide LAC who are placed out of county with the same level of support and attention.

- 114 Through the Children in Need project, support for vulnerable children and their families is well co-ordinated across different agencies. Pupil Support Services, schools, the youth service, the youth offending team (YOT) and the parenting support service attend family support meetings to create a joint support plan for a child in need and their family. As a result of this support, many children show increased self-esteem and improve their attendance in school. However, the project is not yet available in all areas of the county.
- 115 The local authority works well with Careers Wales to improve information sharing through the Keeping in Touch (KIT) project. Young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) are tracked well by the council's Keeping in Touch (KIT) organisation which supports them in accessing learning opportunities. As a result, the number of young people not in education, employment or training in Pembrokeshire is among the lowest in Wales. However, the local authority and its partners do not yet effectively keep in touch with young people after they have progressed into post-16 options. This means that support is not well co-ordinated to meet the needs of those who find it difficult to continue with the option they have chosen.
- 116 Local authority education services are beginning to contribute effectively to the youth offending team (YOT) in response to one of the findings of the recent inspection of the service. Senior managers now regularly attend the YOT management meetings and an officer from the Behaviour Support Service has been seconded into the team. As a result, information sharing has improved and educational information is starting to inform planning for individual young people.
- 117 Child protection training is regularly provided to designated teachers, headteachers and governors and the local authority monitors take-up to ensure appropriate attendance. However, the local authority does not have quality assurance systems to ensure that schools' child protection policies and procedures are appropriate. A review of the authority's child protection procedures is now underway to address the above issues.
- 118 The local authority does not monitor outcomes for ethnic minority groups rigorously enough nor use this data to target support. In addition, data is not used well to compare performance of groups of vulnerable pupils with the performance of all pupils or performance of similar pupils in other local authorities.

Support for behaviour

- 119 The rate of permanent exclusions from secondary schools¹³ has remained very low in recent years and is well below the average for Wales. All fixed term exclusions

¹² X Forum is a group which meets regularly to allow looked after children (LAC) to express their views on the local authority's services.

¹³ Sources: National Statistics: SDR 29/2005, Exclusions from Schools in Wales, 2003/04; SDR 32/2006, Exclusions from Schools in Wales, 2004/05; SDR 32/2007, Exclusions from Schools in Wales, 2005/06

saw an increase in 2004-2005 but have reduced again in 2005-2006. They are now below the Wales average. The total number of days lost through exclusion has reduced between 2003 and 2006 and is now one of the lowest in Wales. However, the number of days lost for exclusions of five days or fewer is still too high, although below the Wales average.

Fixed term of five days or fewer (rate per 1,000 pupils)	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006
Pembrokeshire	34.1	7.2	7.5
Wales	6.3	9.7	0.7
Rank	5	15	13

Fixed term of six days or more (rate per 1,000 pupils)	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006
Pembrokeshire	3.9	6.5	3.9
Wales	8.2	9.9	9.0
Rank	3	5	3

- 120 The local authority has a well-co-ordinated system of support and provision to help prevent pupils becoming excluded from school. Schools have a good understanding of the range of support available which includes nurture groups, in-school behaviour support, personal tuition for individual pupils, pupil referral units (PRUs) and PRIDE¹⁴. The Inclusion Panel meets regularly and it effectively co-ordinates access to the PRUs and PRIDE as well as the statutory statementing process.

Early support for behaviour and learning through nurture groups

The nurture group programme in Pembrokeshire is improving behaviour and identifying additional learning needs earlier. Eight members of staff are trained by the Nurture Group network to provide training and support within schools in Pembrokeshire. As a result, more school staff, including learning support assistants, are able to access accredited training. Fifty people were trained during the period September 2006 to February 2008.

Schools make good use of the Boxall Profile¹⁵ to identify pupils who could benefit from attending the nurture group. Pupils then remain in the group for four terms, during which time they access the full curriculum but with more focused support and a greater focus on developing communication skills. Pupils are then reintegrated into mainstream classes.

Although, the local authority has not yet fully evaluated the impact of the nurture groups there have already been positive outcomes. In one secondary school, the exclusions reduced by 17% after the nurture group had been set up.

- 121 Out-of-school behaviour support is managed by each family of schools. Most schools demonstrate good ownership of the service and plan the work of the

¹⁴ PRIDE is a full-time programme in Pembrokeshire's secondary schools for disengaged learners, and in post-16 it is a vocational programme.

¹⁵ The Boxall Profile is an assessment tool which helps teachers develop a precise and accurate understanding of children's emotional and behavioural difficulties. It can be used to plan interventions and support activities.

behaviour support teacher well to meet the needs of schools within their family. However, in a few areas these management arrangements result in inconsistent or inflexible access to support for primary schools. The local authority recognises this and a review of the service is planned for later in 2008.

- 122 The Behaviour Support Service co-ordinates the PRIDE vocational programme well for 14-16 year olds. Pupils access a good range of curriculum opportunities as well as basic and key skills work, work experience and outdoor pursuits. In 2007, all pupils left with at least one entry level qualification and many pupils gained a combination of GCSEs, vocational awards and other qualification such as the Duke of Edinburgh award or First Aid. PRIDE staff have good relationships with schools and schools receive regular progress reports for pupils. As a result of the success of the programme and the positive partnership with schools, the programme now offers an additional opportunity for pupils who are not yet ready for other post-16 options.
- 123 The local authority works well with partners to prevent bullying and promote children and young people's emotional well-being. A very good range of training, resources and support is available to prevent bullying. This range includes briefing materials for governors, assertiveness training for vulnerable year 6 pupils, an anti-bullying website and pupil conferences. A very comprehensive pack is available to promote internet safety and prevent cyber-bullying. However, there is little planned work to promote racial harmony or prevent homophobic bullying.

Support for attendance

- 124 The pupil support service's strong partnership with schools and other partners helps to address poor attendance. Pupil support officers are based in each of the eight families of schools and provide good advice and support to staff in schools and other settings such as the PRU. Data is used well to target work with individual pupils whose attendance is less than 80%. The local authority analyses attendance well and targets additional resources in schools with low attendance. As a result, attendance has improved significantly in two secondary schools.
- 125 Attendance in primary schools is above the Wales average and unauthorised absences are very low. Between 2004 and 2006, attendance decreased steadily in secondary schools although it remained above the Wales average. Attendance in secondary schools has increased in 2006-2007 and is now one of the highest in Wales. Unauthorised absences in secondary schools have been about the Wales average between 2004 and 2006 but also improved in 2007.

Primary schools ¹⁶	2003-2004		2004-2005		2005-2006	
	Attendance	Unauthorised absences	Attendance	Unauthorised absences	Attendance	Unauthorised absences
Pembrokeshire	93.4%	0.3	93.8%	0.2%	93%	0.3%
Wales	93.2%	0.7%	93.1%	0.8%	92.5%	1.0%
Rank	11	2	8	1	10	3

¹⁶ 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; SDR 23/2008 Absenteeism from Primary Schools in Wales, 2007

Secondary schools ¹⁷	2004-2005		2005-2006		2006-2007	
	Attendance	Unauthorised absences	Attendance	Unauthorised absences	Attendance	Unauthorised absences
Pembrokeshire	90.9%	1.8%	90.4%	1.7%	91.8%	1.3%
Wales	90.7%	1.7%	90.2%	1.7%	90.7%	1.8%
Rank	11	13	10	12	2	9

<p>Additional Learning Needs Grade 1: Good with outstanding features</p>
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Meeting statutory duties

- 126 The authority makes very good provision and provides high-quality professional advice and support for pre-school and school-age children and young people with ALN. These learners achieve good standards in mainstream schools, attached specialist units, the special school and the pupil referral unit. An outstanding feature is the joint working between staff in mainstream and specialist settings to share expertise and provision for pupils with ALN.
- 127 The authority meets the statutory requirements of the SEN and Disability Act (2001). Assessments, statements and reviews are completed thoroughly and on time. The quality of this work is good and officers monitor the provision and progress of pupils with statements and on the school action plus stage through regular consultation with schools.
- 128 The authority makes reasonable adjustments so that individual disabled children can access mainstream education in local schools and specialist attached units. The authority has a clear strategy to improve accessibility to all schools and is making good progress with this work.

Provision for pupils with ALN

- 129 The authority's strategic approach to making provision for pupils with ALN is outstanding.

¹⁷ Sources: National Statistics: SDR 107/2005 (R), Absenteeism from Secondary Schools in Wales, 2004/05 and 1998 – 2004 (Revised); SDR 143/2006, Absenteeism from Secondary Schools in Wales, 2005/06; SDR 163/2007 Absenteeism from Secondary Schools in Wales, 2006/07

The authority's strategy for ALN

Provision for learners with ALN is an integral part of the authority's inclusion strategy. The key elements of the cohesive policy and practice for ALN are:

- a high level of delegation of funding to schools at an appropriate level to meet pupils' ALN, guaranteed for three year periods;
- a very significant reduction in the number of statements and more time for educational psychologists to work with staff, pupils and parents;
- readily available, high quality advice and support from the learning support service; and
- a comprehensive training programme for teachers and learning support assistants, often leading to specialist and accredited qualifications and effective monitoring of outcomes at all levels.

The strategy has increased the capacity and capability of mainstream schools to meet the individual needs of pupils with ALN without undue recourse to external agencies. This is very cost effective as it minimises the need for providing statements of special educational needs. Schools have used their delegated funding to appoint additional teachers and learning support assistants and for specialist training. The quality of provision and outcomes for pupils with ALN have improved because the authority has engaged and empowered schools to take responsibility for ALN and given them the resources and flexibility to tailor provision to the needs of learners. As a result, schools are committed to inclusive practice and make very good provision to meet the needs of individual pupils.

- 130 The priority given to addressing ALN and deprivation is evident in the increases in the total overall schools and authority expenditure on SEN/deprivation. This has risen from £8,800k in 2004-2005 to £13,300k in 2007-2008. As a proportion of ISB¹⁸ this is an increase from 12.4% to 16.7% in the same period.
- 131 Educational psychologists and the learning support service have a wide range of expertise in specialist areas of ALN. They provide good quality guidance and advice to schools, pupils and parents and lead initiatives in families of schools that develop teachers' skills. An outstanding feature is the authority's approach to increasing expertise by training its own staff in specialisms where external recruitment is not successful. The authority is extending this policy at all levels in schools, through providing access to a very good range of training and national initiatives, including accredited courses with national bodies in specialist areas such as language, autism, dyslexia and hearing and visual impairment. These skills are well used by the authority to spread expertise within families of schools.
- 132 The Pembrokeshire screening tool¹⁹ for ALN has improved teachers' knowledge and understanding of pupils' specific needs. The screening tool enables teachers to

¹⁸ ISB – Individual schools budget. This is the money delegated to schools from the local authority

¹⁹ The Pembrokeshire screening tool was devised by the Pembrokeshire County Council education service, Pembrokeshire Derwen NHS Trust and Pembrokeshire local health board to detect the need for early intervention if a child is not functioning well in key areas of development.

diagnose learning needs effectively and plan appropriate support. It has improved the way that teachers and the authority monitor and record the progress and achievements of pupils with ALN.

- 133 The authority monitors closely the outcomes of pupils with ALN. It has much better knowledge than previously of these outcomes. Educational psychologists and learning support staff use outcome data on specific areas of SEN very well to understand the support needs within schools and to monitor the progress of pupils with statements of SEN and on the 'school action plus' and 'school action' stages of the SEN Code of Practice. The authority is able to demonstrate improvements in outcomes for pupils with ALN over the last three years. There are plans to use data further to fine tune targeting of services where they are most needed and to track progress of individual pupils, for example, those with English as an additional language (EAL) and multi-ethnic groups.

Measuring the learning outcomes of pupils with ALN

The Pembrokeshire screening tool provides primary schools and the authority with detailed information about pupils with learning difficulties and specific ALN. The screening tool includes tracking systems that enable the authority and schools to monitor pupils' progress in key areas of development and the impact of teaching strategies and intervention programmes. Schools also monitor outcomes and value-added progress through teacher assessment and assessment processes such as NFER tests, the All Wales Reading Test, the Boxall test and specific intervention programme assessments. Schools share the results of the Pembrokeshire Screening Tool with the authority each November.

The authority also measures annually the attainment of pupils with ALN by matching PLASC data²⁰ for pupils on the School Action and School Action Plus stages of the SEN Code of Practice and with statements, with their attainment in end of key stage teacher assessments in each of the core subjects and the core subject indicator.

Officers use the information from the Pembrokeshire Screening Tool, PLASC and assessments to identify where further support is needed. For example, the highest incidence of pupils with ALN not achieving the core subject indicator in key stage 1 and key stage 2 is where pupils have speech, language and communication difficulties. As a result the authority has provided additional speech and language intervention programmes and training that are improving outcomes.

The authority provides good quality data on the learning outcomes of pupils with ALN at school and authority level for all primary schools. Schools use this data to evaluate the impact of their provision for pupils with ALN with their school development advisor. The authority is now piloting the Screening Tool in Years 7 and Years 8 in secondary schools.

- 134 There is a range of partnerships between education, social and health services. In the best examples, partnerships identify pupils' needs and target specialist support at an early stage. For example, the authority has a very effective speech, language and

²⁰ Pupil Level Annual School Census data that schools send to the Welsh Assembly Government in January each year

communication strategy for joint working between education staff and the speech and language therapy service that has significantly improved pupils' language skills. There has been also significant progress in developing links with health regarding physical development, including a very good jointly-produced training and support pack for the development of gross and fine motor skills in the early years. However, there is not enough support for pupils with complex emotional problems

- 135 The authority has multi-agency referral systems with social services and health professionals to provide an integrated approach to the education and care of young people. There are appropriate arrangements for tri-partite funding for out of county placements. In some areas, partnership working is very effective, including clear protocols for the sharing of relevant information and joint provision, for example, in the Cymorth funded Children in Need project. However, partnership working is not consistently in place across the age range. The authority plans to improve partnership working through its complex needs panel and through the Children and Young People Plan.
- 136 The authority has increased its capacity to meet the needs of the significantly increasing numbers of pupils with English as an additional language. The learning support service provides prompt assessments of the needs of these pupils and has begun to produce more guidance for staff in schools.
- 137 The authority has a policy and successful initiatives for raising standards of pupils who are more able and talented. These strategies enable more able and talented pupils to work together on challenging enrichment activities to develop their talents in line with their potential.
- 138 The proportion of pupils with statements has reduced since 2003 and is now, at 2.36%, below the Welsh average of 3.15%, and the sixth lowest in Wales. Over the same period of time, the authority has more than halved the annual number of new statements. The authority educates effectively a significantly higher than average proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs (SEN) in mainstream schools and classes and a correspondingly lower proportion in special classes or units and the special school. The school placement of pupils with statements of SEN in January 2007 is shown in the following table:

School placement	Percentage (Pembrokeshire)	Percentage (Wales)
Mainstream schools (ordinary classes)	72.0	50.9
Mainstream schools (special classes or units)	9.3	20.2
Maintained special schools	16.2	24.4
Independent schools (including non-maintained)	1.9	2.2
Pupil referral units/other than at school	0.7	2.5

Work with parents and carers

- 139 The authority provides parents and carers with good advice and guidance. It has engaged them in the inclusion strategy and extended their understanding of ALN, though involving them in county events on specialist issues such as dyslexia.

- 140 There are good arrangements for parents and carers to contribute to assessments and reviews of their children's progress. There are informal and formal arrangements for them to provide the authority with feedback about the statementing and assessment process and their evaluations are very positive indeed.
- 141 The very low rate of appeal to the SEN Tribunal for Wales over the last four years suggests that the authority is successful in negotiating with parents and reaching agreement about the most appropriate provision for their children.

Access and school organisation Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

Provision of school places

- 142 Planning places has been given very high priority by officers and members since 1996. Officers and members have made very difficult decisions about the closure and amalgamation of schools in the interest of learners. There is a clear vision for the long term rationalisation of schools in the authority. This is linked extremely well with other priorities for education such as the development of community-focused schools and improving the quality of the learning environment for pupils. A wide range of community provision has been included as part of rationalisation programmes, which meets very well the differing needs of the local communities involved.
- 143 The authority takes great care to explain the benefits of its rationalisation proposals for pupils and the wider community. For example, parents of pupils whose schools have been part of rationalisation projects are asked to explain the benefits that have been gained at public meetings called to consider other proposals. The authority also makes clear that all revenue saved as a result of rationalisation is put back into education priorities. There is widespread support in schools for the authority's strategy. In the WAO and Estyn schools' perception surveys for 2006 and 2007, the local authority was rated highest in Wales for the effectiveness of school place planning.
- 144 The authority has been very successful in significantly reducing net surplus places in primary schools, from around 25% in 1996 to below 10% in 2003, and in maintaining the figure below 10% from 2003 to 2007 while the number on roll was falling. At the same time, the authority has removed a large proportion of the temporary classrooms used in schools. The accommodation for learning is of excellent quality because capital investment has been targeted at rationalisation which resulted in new buildings or the refurbishment of existing buildings.
- 145 In the secondary sector, the authority has increased the overall number of places in order to address the rise in total pupils on roll that occurred until 2006, and the ongoing increase in demand for Welsh-medium education. Net surplus places in secondary schools have remained below 5% for most of that period. Measures to address the increase in surplus capacity in secondary schools, brought about by falling rolls since 2006, are appropriately centred on remodelling schools to increase the size of many classrooms to recommended standards, and continuing to develop community-focused provision.

- 146 For 2008 onwards, the authority has recalculated the capacity data for each school in line with the Welsh Assembly Government's revised capacity formula. The authority will need to plan future targets for reducing surplus places in the light of these new calculations.
- 147 The authority has an effective system for forecasting the number of pupils in secondary schools. In recent years, the method used in the primary phase has generally given satisfactory outcomes that underestimated the actual figures by around 2%. For 2008, however, the results underestimate actual figures by over 4%. The authority moved quickly to try to identify possible reasons for this discrepancy, which may lead to revision of the forecasting system for the primary phase.
- 148 The authority offers a free part-time education place for all three-year old children the term following their third birthday. Most part-time three-year olds who take up the offer of such a place attend early years settings in schools. Where such provision is not available, part-time three-year old children attend non-maintained settings approved by the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership.

Asset management planning and the education capital programme

- 149 The authority has high quality and regularly updated information on the condition, sufficiency and suitability of school buildings. This information is used very effectively to inform short, medium and long term planning for capital investments and for maintenance. Plans and priorities are shared appropriately with headteachers. Asset management planning is extremely well linked with the authority's priorities for rationalising schools and school places, and developing community focused schools.
- 150 The authority shows a high level of commitment to providing resources to improve its education buildings. The authority has spent in excess of £100 million (capital and revenue); this does not include expenditure of £20 million for leisure facilities which are accessible to schools and their pupils. Increases in capital funding for education have, over time, raised Pembrokeshire's comparative spend on capital from near the bottom to the top quarter of the all-Wales comparison in recent years. The authority has used a range of innovative means to increase available capital including the use of the Private Finance Initiative (PFI), a land deal with an international retailer to secure a new school, and incentives to encourage schools to spend surplus balances on improvements to buildings by providing matched funding. All revenue savings from the school rationalisation programme are reinvested back into education priorities. Income from the release of land and buildings by education services is reinvested in the Council's capital programme in which education is given high priority.
- 151 Overall, the authority has made very good progress in improving the quality of the building stock since 1996. Visits to a sample of schools and learning centres during the inspection indicate that new buildings and refurbishment of existing buildings is of excellent quality. The authority has been very successful in reducing the number of temporary classrooms in schools. The maintenance backlog for education buildings has decreased in recent years.
- 152 The authority has made good progress in addressing the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). The approach taken to improving accessibility for pupils with disabilities combines well the need to adopt a strategic approach to

improving access across the authority while catering suitably for individual pupils with disabilities who are already of school age.

Admissions to schools

- 153 The authority manages admissions effectively. There is generally clear and comprehensive information for parents about the authority's policies and arrangements for admissions to schools. The authority makes good attempts to liaise over admissions with other local admissions authorities such as neighbouring local authorities and governors of voluntary aided schools. Each of the admissions authorities has the same final dates for parents to submit their preferences.
- 154 Almost all parents secure a place for their children in their preferred school. There is an effective system for dealing with the few appeals that are made within an appropriate timescale. Places have been secured for LAC in their preferred schools in recent years, but the authority does not include priority for LAC in its oversubscription criteria.
- 155 The authority regularly surveys parents' views on admissions. The outcomes of annual surveys of a sample of parents' views of admissions procedures show high levels of satisfaction. The WAO and Estyn school survey in 2007 rates the effectiveness of the authority's coordination of the admissions process as the highest in Wales.

Home-to-school transport

- 156 The authority's home-to-school transport policy is clear and readily available to parents. The policy is more generous than is required by law, for example, in providing free transport to pupils over statutory school age, to Welsh-medium secondary education and to Voluntary Aided schools.
- 157 There are codes of practice, which set out responsibilities and expectations regarding school transport for operators, drivers, attendants, schools, pupils and parents. Arrangements for dealing with unruly behaviour by pupils are clear. Closed circuit television cameras help deter unruly behaviour and provide useful support when authority officers need to investigate occasional incidents.
- 158 The contract conditions that the authority has with transport companies help to ensure the quality of provision. Officers undertake regular checks to monitor compliance with legislation and contract conditions. The authority requires that all attendants, taxi drivers and bus drivers involved in home-to-school transport have enhanced criminal records bureau (CRB) checks.
- 159 The level of complaints against the service is very low. In the WAO school survey in 2007, schools rated the effectiveness and reliability of home-to-school transport in the top quartile in Wales.
- 160 Officers have good knowledge of the costs of various aspects of the home-to-school transport service. Costs compared to the number of pupils in the authority are high. However, the rural nature of much of the authority means that transport is provided for a high proportion of pupils. Good efforts are made to minimise costs within the authority's policy through, for example careful attention to route planning and

procurement. The recently completed review of school catchments by the authority may also provide additional scope for cost savings.

Support services

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

- 161 Details of the services offered or brokered by the Council are well presented in both hard copy and online. There is no presumption on the part of the Council to be the sole provider, and schools rate highly the local authority's support in becoming effective purchasers. Services are easy to order and free standing and schools have the information they need to exercise choice over the level, volume and amount spent on services. Information is provided in a way that schools can monitor the service that they receive. Prices of in-house services are competitive and related to the costs of provision and invoicing arrangements work smoothly.
- 162 Most contracts contain clear service standards, are for one or three years, with clear notice arrangements for either party to terminate the contract if necessary. Council monitoring demonstrates that the service standards are met in most respects, and this is supported by the WAO and Estyn school perception survey. This shows that schools rate all support services as at least satisfactory; most are good, and the majority are either rated as in the top quarter or 'best in class' against local authorities across England and Wales. Most shortcomings are tackled at an early stage.

a) Finance

- 163 Budget monitoring at both school and service level is good. The Council's financial systems work reliably, and link effectively to schools' systems and schools feel well supported. Reconciliation works smoothly and errors are resolved effectively. A particular feature is the ability for schools to enter their financial commitments on an integrated system. This means that the council places schools planned and or committed spending into its conventional financial system.
- 164 Schools are well supported to plan and manage their own budgets and offered suitable software, training and benchmarked data on their spending. The local authority has successfully encouraged and enabled schools to develop their own capacity. As a result, schools are far more confident and capable in managing their own finances and have now decided that only one package of support is needed compared to the previous two. Increasingly, guidance and training are available that encourage schools to base decisions on desired educational outcomes.
- 165 The Schools' Forum is particularly active and supportive in developing policy in agreement with schools. For example, they have agreed that, from 1 April 2008, schools with a balance above an agreed level will be subject to clawback with the money being directed into supporting ALN.
- 166 Education service managers feel well supported in financial management and can predict and manage their budgets or trading accounts actively and effectively through the year. Apart from an identified and manageable potential deficit in school meals, there have been no significant overspends in recent years.

b) Human resources (HR)

- 167 The provision of personnel and payroll support for schools is good and schools in Pembrokeshire give these services the highest rating in England and Wales in the WAO and Estyn school perception survey. Council and schools' responsibilities are clear, administration is reliable, central staff records are accurate and regularly checked against school records. The Council is successful in assuring the supply and quality of teachers and learning support staff. Contracts of employment are issued within the statutory time period. The rationalisation of schools has been supported well by the effective way in which redundancies and re-deployments are handled. Very good relationships with the unions have been nurtured, and as a result there have been no industrial tribunals since 1996.
- 168 Schools have good online access to a range of up-to-date model policies covering all key issues. This is supported by very well received training for heads and governors, which also tackles complex areas under the intriguingly titled course 'The Scary bits we don't like to think about!' which covers recruitment, equalities, pay, discipline, grievance, capability, sickness and other absence, redundancy, and retirement. More recent developments around analysing stress risk are innovative and about to be piloted in schools.
- 169 Casework is well supported and advice is technically reliable, with a small bespoke team having valued, personal contact with schools. Staff absence in schools is very low. The last full year figures showed 4.5% absence, with current year figures at only 2.9%.

c) Information and communications technology (ICT)

- 170 Support for ICT is good. There is an effective Council strategy in place for the management and use of pupil performance data and staff, premises and financial information. Links with curriculum ICT, particularly over pupil attainment data and its use, are effective, productive and positively viewed by schools.
- 171 There is effective, well-managed electronic communication between schools and the Council. This is improving as the major initiative around the 'e-Portal' develops and gains momentum.
- 172 Schools are well-supported in purchasing and in technical support and they can access effective training locally on relevant issues. There are common hardware and software platforms across primary schools. Secondary systems are more varied, but suitable support is offered through the service level agreements (SLA). Response times for delivering technical solutions and/or repairs are timely and generally do not compromise administrative or educational service delivery in schools.
- 173 The Council's website provides the public with useful information about all relevant education services and key documents, including catchment areas. Key public documents such as statutory education plans can be easily accessed and there are effective mechanisms for ensuring all website materials are up-to-date. Email queries from members of the public are monitored and receive timely responses.

Property related services

- 174 Property related services are satisfactory overall. The respective responsibilities of schools and the Council with regard to buildings work and maintenance are set out clearly. The compliance of both parties is monitored effectively by a small team of area-based qualified surveyors who also provide advice on priority, programming, contract letting, contract supervision and payments management.

An outstanding feature in the council's property related services

Schools are aware of how their premises priorities will be met because they have all been provided recently with a 30-year, costed maintenance plan which clearly links to the Council's annual maintenance programme and sets out their responsibilities and those of the Council. Surveyors provide good advice on how schemes may be funded. Maintenance contracts are available for schools to join if they wish; these contracts are well adapted to schools' needs. Building projects are managed effectively, with recent major projects coming in on budget and on, or ahead of time. Emergency repairs are prompt and easily organised. Out-of-hours emergencies are attended promptly; there is good immediate and follow-up support to the school following fires, floods and other major incidents. Collectively, these features enable schools to get good value for money from their property related budgets.

- 175 School cleaning and grounds maintenance are generally satisfactorily rated by schools, but there are shortcomings around the recruitment and retention of cleaning staff, and the effective deployment of grounds staff which the local authority accepts are lowering performance. The Schools Forum has agreed to review the position as a priority, and some well considered plans for improvement are already being considered.

School meals

- 176 The school meals service runs effectively and is very highly regarded by schools. A particularly strong feature is their support of the healthy schools agenda, to which all schools are signed up. However, progress in this area has reduced income and the secondary cafeteria service is in deficit for the first time. This is due to a dip in the take-up of the new healthier menus and the abolishment of vending machines for selling fizzy drinks and sweets. Robust steps are being taken to rectify this. These steps (most of which cover both primary and secondary schools) include:

- the appointment of a Business Manager for the service;
- the appointment of a Food and Healthy Lifestyles Promoter, with responsibility for further developing marketing strategy for the service;
- primary sector marketing using 'Lennie the Leek';
- raising awareness of entitlements;
- introduction of electronic payments; and

- expansion of the cashless system.

Value for money

177 The Council compares its costs and outcomes with those of other authorities and can demonstrate that, for the great majority of its services, it is providing average or better outcomes, for average or below spending. Furthermore, there are many instances where the corporate, proactive approach to investing to save has been utilised. Probably the best example of this is the investment in early intervention in primary schools to improve attainment and prevent costly statementing of pupils with SEN.

Findings: Will the authority's performance improve?

Strategic management

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

- 178 The authority has very good prospects for maintaining the good and outstanding characteristics of its strategic management. Outstanding leadership from senior officers and elected members along with a good track record of improvements and sound succession planning provide a solid foundation for further development. In addition, the efficient and effective way that the authority operates as a corporate body provides excellent prospects for maintaining these high standards.

Support for school improvement

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

- 179 The quality of leadership for school improvement is outstanding. Leaders have a very clear vision for school improvement; they have successfully developed an education community that is committed to seeking ways of improving.
- 180 Schools have a high regard for the service in terms of the advice, guidance and support they receive. They have confidence in the service and trust leaders to provide them with sufficient challenge to continue to make improvements. The service has credibility with its users.
- 181 The significant improvements already in place include:
- a track record of steady improvement from an already high baseline. Almost all performance indicators show improvement over the last three years when often all Wales data has reached a plateau. Good progress has been made in the percentage of pupils attaining A*-C in key stage 4 in the last two years;
 - good value added from key stage 3 into key stage 4. key stage 4 pupils attain better than expected on the basis of prior attainment;
 - only 0.7% of pupils in 2007 left school with no qualification. Pembrokeshire has the highest post-16 staying-on rate in Wales;
 - positive outcomes from Estyn Section 28 inspections, with schools achieving high percentages of grade 2 and above in standards, the quality of teaching and leadership and management;
 - provision for pupils with additional learning needs is outstanding; and
 - pupil attendance has improved and permanent exclusions have remained very low in recent years and are well below the average for Wales.
- 182 There is good planning for the development of the 14-19 learning pathways. Good practice exists within the authority in terms of the developing co-operation between the Haverfordwest schools and Pembrokeshire College. This is a strong feature of

the authority's 14-19 provision. This initiative is successfully enhancing pupils' choices. Ysgol y Preseli has recently developed Welsh-medium vocational provision for post 16 learners. Elsewhere in the county the 14-19 Learning Pathways are not as well developed and pupils' vocational choices are more limited.

- 183 The authority's electronic information system 'e-portal' has the potential to be an important driver for continuing the authority's drive for school improvement. Many schools, particularly in the primary sector, are using it to share good practice in teaching and learning and assessment.

<p>Promoting social inclusion and well-being Grade 2: Improvement prospects are good, with no major barriers</p>
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- 184 The local authority's work to support vulnerable groups and improve attendance and behaviour has led to improved outcomes. Permanent exclusions are very low, and attendance is improving. Achievements by LAC and pupils from the Gypsy Traveller community are good and in a few cases very good.
- 185 Good relationships with Social Services are being extended to accommodate the obligations arising from the Children's Act 2004. Managers from both education and social services meet together regularly and there is good joint work on initiatives such as supporting LAC and the Children in Need project.
- 186 The local authority has invested well in training to increase the capacity of the education service and schools to sustain developments such as nurture groups. However, there remains uncertainty over long term funding for some successful initiatives.
- 187 The local authority has a good understanding of what further improvements are needed and has planned action to address these. There is a planned review of behaviour support arrangements.

<p>Additional Learning Needs Grade 1: Improvement prospects are good, with significant improvements already in place</p>
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- 188 Senior authority officers and service managers for ALN have an excellent track record of managing significant cultural and operational change which has improved provision and outcomes for pupils with ALN.
- 189 Since the last inspection, the authority has increased resources and very significantly developed the capacity and capability of schools to make very good provision for pupils with ALN. Schools are fully engaged as willing partners in the authority's inclusion strategy and use resources effectively and efficiently to improve the learning outcomes of pupils with ALN.
- 190 In the WAO and Estyn school perception survey, schools consistently rated all aspects of work to raise standards for pupil with SEN into the top quarter and as the best in Wales in almost all areas.
- 191 The authority has addressed the key recommendations from the last inspection of SEN in 2002. It has recruited two additional educational psychologists and now

provides a full, well-qualified service. There is a well-developed service level agreement with health that provides an effective service for pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties.

- 192 The authority has a very good knowledge of the specific needs of pupils with ALN and their learning outcomes to plan further improvements and to monitor the impact of initiatives.
- 193 Although there are some good examples of effective multi-agency working, there are inconsistencies in the quality of arrangements for joint working, particularly with health and social services.
- 194 A key recommendation in the last inspection was that there should be more detail in the ALN/SEN improvement plan on timescales, interim milestones, lead responsibilities for aspects of service delivery and quantitative targets for improvement. Although business planning for ALN is good, there is no ALN service or improvement plan with the necessary level of detail for monitoring the impact of services and for performance management.

Access and school organisation

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

- 195 Officers and members show very firm commitment to continue to address the need to rationalise the provision of school places and to improve the quality of accommodation in schools. They are committed to building upon the very good progress the authority has already made in this respect. They have a strong record of taking difficult decisions about school rationalisation in the interests of learners. The significant improvements in the quality of accommodation for pupils and for community provision, achieved through rationalisation projects, have been instrumental in obtaining the support of schools and communities for the authority's strategy for school rationalisation.
- 196 The very good quality of information on education buildings, forward planning for asset management and the authority's record of providing funding for capital projects mean that the authority is well placed to build upon the significant improvements already made in the quality of education building stock.
- 197 The authority has suitable plans to ensure that important experience and skills that officers have for the development and delivery of access services are shared with others before officers leave the authority.
- 198 The imminent involvement of the authority in a WLGA transport project presents a good opportunity to further improve the provision for home-to-school transport. The forecasting methodology for the number of pupils in primary schools, which has provided the authority with reasonable forecasts in the past, has produced results for 2008 that underestimate figures by over 4%. The authority has moved quickly to try to identify possible reasons for this.

Support services

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

- 199 The authority's support services are highly valued by schools. It is an open and transparent system that allows comparisons of costings and outcomes with the support services of other authorities and independent providers. This enables schools to see that the majority of the authority's support services provide good value for money. Where there are shortcomings, the authority, through consultation with its Schools' Forum, moves quickly to review the situation. As a result, some well-considered plans for improvement are already being considered where a few services are considered to be currently less than satisfactory. The authority's very good track record of steady improvement and its proactive and rapid response when any of its services fall below a minimum acceptable standard mean that improvement prospects for the support services are good.

The authority's response to the report findings

The officers and elected members of Pembrokeshire Local Authority would like to thank the inspection team for the thorough and professional manner in which they conducted the inspection. The process has been a challenging but positive experience and has confirmed that the education community in Pembrokeshire provides a sound service to children, young people and their families, and that the Authority provides very good quality support to our schools.

Our self evaluation was a comprehensive and realistic appraisal and we are pleased that it closely matches the finding of the inspectors with only two judgements changing by a grade.

We are pleased that the energy and dedication of staff across the Council's services in providing valued support to schools has been recognised. The report highlights the good progress that has been made in improving outcomes in all services in recent years. The very positive findings are a reflection of, and a worthy tribute to, the commitment of all staff, schools, governors and elected members associated with the Education Service in Pembrokeshire.

We accept the recommendations and it is the intention of the service to incorporate these issues for improvement promptly into our post-inspection action plan and into the developing Children and Young People's Plan.

Pembrokeshire strives to offer ever higher standards in all areas of its work and to build on its successes. We feel that this report provides an excellent springboard for our further development.

Appendix 1

The grade profile

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

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

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Jeff Jones HMI	Estyn	Reporting Inspector
Andy Hawkins HMI	Estyn	Team inspector
Bev Jenkins HMI	Estyn	Team Inspector
Jassa Scott HMI	Estyn	Team Inspector
Rick Hawkley AI	Estyn	Team Inspector
Colin McShane	Wales Audit Office	Team Inspector
Alan Lowndes AI	Independent Inspector	Team Inspector
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Robin Brown	Swansea Local Authority Education Directorate	Peer Assessor
Graham Longster	Pembrokeshire Local Authority Education Directorate	Nominee