Inspection of

Powys Local Education Authority

Support for School Improvement

by Estyn, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales
The purpose of Estyn is to inspect quality and standards in education and training in Wales. Estyn is responsible for inspecting:

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

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

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Appendix 1: The inspection team
1. Introduction

Local education authority (LEA) inspections are carried out under Section 38 of the Education Act 1997. They contribute to, and comply with the requirements of, the Wales Programme for Improvement\(^1\). Each LEA inspection usually focuses on at least one major area of activity that has already been the focus of a self-evaluation process by the LEA.

Powys LEA reviewed support for school improvement in the period from April 2005 to September 2005 by using the authority’s Best Value Review procedures.

The report and resulting action plan was approved by the authority in October 2005.

This area of activity was inspected in December 2005. The inspection team comprised an inspector working on behalf of the Wales Audit Office and three inspectors from Estyn. The team examined documentation relating to the authority’s review and interviewed relevant staff. The views of users were obtained through scrutiny of questionnaire outcomes, and discussions with focus groups and other representative groups.

The inspection team is required to make two key judgements. These are:

(1) How good is the LEA’s performance in respect of the area of responsibility that is being inspected?

The LEA’s performance in discharging its responsibilities is rated on a four-point scale as follows:

- excellent - good with outstanding features
- good - good features and no important shortcomings
- fair - good features outweigh shortcomings
- poor - many important shortcomings

\(^1\) Wales Programme for Improvement: Guidance for local authorities (Circular 18/2002), National Assembly for Wales, 2002
(2) **Will the LEA’s performance improve in respect of the area of responsibility that is being inspected?**

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

- **excellent** - improvement prospects are good, with significant improvements already in place
- **promising** - improvement prospects are good, with no major barriers
- **uncertain** - some good prospects, but barriers in important areas
- **poor** - many important barriers to improvement

The inspection team’s findings in relation to support for school improvement are summarised in Section 3 of this report.
2. Background

Powys is a large, rural county in mid-Wales with a population of 125,000. It is the most sparsely-populated county in England and Wales. Just over 20% of the population are Welsh speakers.

In Powys, there are 107 primary schools, 13 secondary schools, three special schools and special units in 12 primary schools. About three-quarters of the primary schools have fewer than 130 pupils and just over half have fewer than 90 pupils. The numbers on roll in secondary schools range from 1,070 pupils to 287. Eight of the 13 secondary schools have fewer than 650 pupils. The proportion of 16-year-olds who stay in full-time education and training is 82% compared with 75% for Wales as a whole. Just over half of these learners stay on in school. There are 201 pupils in the three special schools. Overall, 956 pupils (4.52%) have statements of special educational need compared with the Wales average of 3.27%. The proportion of pupils entitled to free schools meals (9.6% in January 2005) is well below the average for Wales (17.0%).

The Powys economy is reliant on a relatively narrow industrial base that includes sectors such as health, agriculture and education. There are many small businesses and a high proportion of unskilled occupations. Powys has the highest proportion of working-age adults in employment in Wales and it has a low unemployment rate compared with the rest of Wales. However, average earnings and household incomes are among the lowest in the United Kingdom.

Support for school improvement

Until July 2005, education, together with children’s services and lifelong learning, was part of the Children, Families and Lifelong Learning (CFLL) directorate. In July 2005, the authority transferred children’s services to the Community Services directorate, which contains adult social services, and the group director for CFLL left the authority. The authority is in the process of revising its corporate management structure and this should be completed by March 2006. There is now an education directorate that includes lifelong learning and continues reporting to the CFFL committee. The authority appointed an Interim Director of Education in September 2005 and this post will continue until March 2006.

In addition to the Interim Director of Education, the education directorate has three heads of service for:

- school improvement;
- lifelong learning and community services; and
- directorate support services.
The inspection focused on the strategic aspects of the school improvement service:

- strategy for school improvement;
- support, monitoring, challenging and intervention;
- leadership, management and planning of the school improvement service; and
- support for school leadership and management, including governors.

Over the last six years Estyn has inspected other aspects of the authority’s work in supporting school improvement. The aspects inspected were:

- literacy;
- numeracy;
- Welsh-medium education;
- curricular support for information and communications technology (ICT); and
- provision for early years.

One of these areas was judged to be excellent, three were good and one was fair. All had promising prospects.

The school improvement service was re-organised in July 2004 in order to focus more clearly on monitoring, challenge and intervention. The school improvement team comprises 12 officers who operate either as school improvement officers or curriculum development officers. All act as school link officers. Seconded teachers provide support for literacy and numeracy and a seconded primary headteacher leads the implementation of the workload agreement.

Performance of schools

The percentages of pupils attaining the core subject indicator in recent years are shown in the charts below:

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2 The core subject indicator is the percentage of pupils who attain the level expected of them in mathematics, science and either English or Welsh (as a first language)
Over the last five years, pupils at all key stages in Powys have performed above the Welsh averages.

**The authority’s review of support for school improvement**

A team of education directorate officers, representative headteachers, elected members and an external consultant carried out the review in accordance with the authority’s Best Value Review procedures. Another independent consultant contributed to the review by producing a report.
Funding

The authority’s total net revenue budget of £190 million for 2005-2006 was at the level of the standard spending assessment (SSA)\(^3\). The total net education budget\(^4\) of £83.9 million in 2005-2006 was 1% above the education component of SSA, compared to 2% above in 2004-2005. This represents £4,000 for each pupil in Powys schools, the fifth highest level of education Indicator-Based Assessment (IBA\(^5\)) per pupil in Wales. Delegated primary school budgets are only slightly above the Wales average.

\(^3\) SSA is the means by which the Welsh Assembly Government distributes Revenue Support Grant to local authorities.

\(^4\) The net education budget excludes income from specific grants.

\(^5\) 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.
3. Summary: Support for school improvement

The scoring chart displays information in two dimensions, one for each of the two key inspection judgements. The inspection judgements are represented by the position of the black circle in relation to the descriptors at the left-hand side and at the foot of the chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are the prospects for improvement?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
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<td>Promising</td>
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<td>Uncertain</td>
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<td>Poor</td>
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<table>
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<th>How good is the LEA’s performance?</th>
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<td>Poor</td>
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<td>Fair</td>
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<tr>
<td>Good</td>
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<td>Excellent</td>
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The LEA’s performance in relation to support for school improvement is good.

Good features of the LEA’s performance are that:

- the authority has a clear vision and aims for the school improvement service and its work is linked well to corporate priorities;
- the authority has a clear strategy for school improvement that is well understood by schools;
- there is an effective and well-organised system for monitoring the work of schools that helps promote the school’s own self-evaluation;
• the strategy ensures that support is differentiated according to performance and is targeted at those schools with the greatest need;
• schools are committed to the authority’s improvement agenda and regard the service as being of good quality;
• the authority’s analysis and use of performance data are of good quality;
• leadership of the service is effective and purposeful;
• the service provides good support for leaders and managers, including governors; and
• there is effective management of the performance of the service.

The areas that require attention are:

× the less than effective support for secondary schools compared with that for primary schools;
× the underdeveloped scrutiny procedures; and
× the unsatisfactory performance of just over a quarter of schools at key stage 1, 2 and 3 which does not match that of similar schools elsewhere in Wales.

Support for school improvement has promising prospects for improvement.

Factors that are likely to support improvement are that:

• leadership of the service is strong and has the trust and confidence of schools;
• the service and schools have a common understanding and commitment to the school improvement strategy;
• the strategy has a clear focus on school improvement, self-evaluation, challenging schools to do better and targeting resources according to need;
• the service engages with, and listens to, schools and makes adjustments to its strategy and procedures where appropriate;
• the service has progressed quickly in establishing its strategy;
• the service has a clear view of its shortcomings and has well-supported plans in place to address these;
• there has been recent good progress in addressing issues in special educational needs (SEN) provision;
there is effective performance management of the service that monitors and evaluates progress and outcomes, has prioritised the key issues for action, and has action plans to address the issues identified; and

the authority has education as an important priority and its restructuring is unlikely to lead to any reduction in the importance of education in the authority.

Factors that are likely to impede improvement are:

- the impact of any cut in school budgets that would inhibit the schools’ ability to respond to the challenges set by the authority; and

- a potential lack of continuity in the quality of leadership at director level.
Recommendations: Support for school improvement

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

R1 implement the planned developments to the school improvement service and strategy;

R2 ensure that there is enough funding to re-structure the school improvement service as intended;

R3 ensure continuity in the status and quality of the post of director of education; and

R4 take action to reduce as quickly as possible the proportion of schools where pupils’ performance is below or well below that of similar schools.
4. Findings: Support for school improvement. How good is the LEA’s performance?

Are the authority’s aims clear and challenging?

The authority’s aims for school improvement are clear and challenging. In its Education Strategic Plan (ESP), the authority has set out specific strategic objectives for the education directorate, including those for school improvement.

The school improvement service has a clear vision statement of ‘successful pupils, successful schools’ that aims to:

- be highly effective in the way the service supports school improvement and raises standards;
- promote and achieve high standards in all schools; and
- support school improvement through challenge and intervention.

The service seeks to implement the aims through:

- strong and effective leadership at all levels;
- excellent communication;
- supportive services;
- successful partnerships; and
- responsive resourcing.

There are good links between corporate, directorate and service planning documents. The authority has identified lifelong learning, which includes education at schools, as a key priority in its community strategy and it has a corporate priority to ‘develop a learning county’. The priorities in the community strategy appropriately influence the priorities of the directorate and in turn those of the school improvement service. The school improvement service recognises the important role it has in helping to realise the authority’s aims.

Do the authority’s policy, provision and relationships meet these aims?

There are effective performance management arrangements for the school improvement service. The ESP acts as the business plan and this is reviewed each quarter in the same way as other authority business plans. The education directorate management team regularly monitors the progress and achievements of the service. It has identified the most important issues that need attention, and all these issues are subject to exception reporting, and detailed and specific action plans. School improvement service team members prepare for their annual performance interview.
by assessing their own work in relation to the standards of the National Association for Educational Inspectors, Advisers and Consultants. Performance appraisal provides a clear evaluation of individual strengths and weaknesses, and results in both individual and team professional development plans to help address any weaknesses. The performance management system is clearly linked to the authority’s aims and priorities for the service and has been effective in improving the performance of the service. The performance management system conforms to the requirements of the authority’s corporate procedures and embodies the same principles. However, it is not linked into the developing system that will enable members and senior officers to monitor the performance of the service quickly.

School improvement service and strategy

The school improvement service is designed to meet the requirements of the Schools and Standards Framework Act 1998 and the Code of Practice for LEA-School Relations.

The school improvement service is led by the head of service: school improvement and consists of a team of 12 officers who all act as School Link Officers (SLOs). Seven of the team are designated as School Improvement Officers (SIO) and their role is to work with those schools identified as needing extra support. The remaining five team members are Curriculum Development Officers and their role is to focus on providing support in an area of the curriculum or a particular phase. SIOs also carry some subject or phase responsibility. All team members have appropriate qualifications and experience, 10 are qualified Estyn inspectors and nine are bilingual. Overall, the team has more expertise in the primary sector than in the secondary sector.

The work of the team is guided by the priorities established in the ESP, in particular priority 1 which is about school improvement. This document provides a clear steer to the work of the service. The authority has a clear and robust strategy for school improvement that its schools understand well. The strategy has developed quickly over the last two years. Leadership of the education directorate and the school improvement service is strong and effective. The service has a clear vision for the future which has been successfully communicated to schools. Schools are committed to the authority’s improvement agenda and regard the service as being of good quality.

The authority is appropriately re-structuring its school improvement service so that all SLOs become school improvement officers. The re-structuring will help the service to meet its aims better. It will result in two elements of the service. The first element will be concerned with the authority’s statutory duties for school improvement and will comprise the team of SIOs. The second element will be concerned with service delivery that will involve grant-funded, traded and brokered services. The re-structuring will require an additional £160,000. Although the full council has not yet agreed these proposals, there is enough funding within the education budget for the re-structuring.
Monitoring of schools

The authority has an effective and well-organised system for monitoring the work of schools that helps promote schools’ own self-evaluation.

The school improvement team analyses in detail the performance information on schools. It interprets performance over periods of time and in relation to a number of factors including national averages, benchmarking based on free school meal entitlement, value added between key stages, proportion of pupils with SEN, size of school and the language characteristics of the school. The authority provides these analyses effectively to schools through useful documents, presentations at headteacher conferences and meetings, or through SLO discussions with individual schools. Schools appreciate and welcome this data. They are able to draw out the key features of their performance and understand how their performance compares with schools in similar circumstances.

SLOs visit their allocated schools each term to discuss school improvement issues with the headteacher. These meetings are guided by a clear agenda. The autumn term meeting focuses appropriately on performance, target setting, and leadership and management. Schools receive a partially completed report that contains information on the school’s performance in National Curriculum assessments and/or external examinations. This approach successfully draws the school’s attention to key aspects of its performance in relation to that of similar schools and the value added between key stages. The report is completed and agreed following the meeting and it is made available to governors. The meeting for the spring term focuses on teaching, assessment, and progress on the implementation of the school development plan and a range of initiatives. The meeting for the summer term focuses on school development planning and the evaluation of the work of the school improvement service. This approach provides a clear and appropriate agenda to help guide the work of SLOs as well as a means of challenging schools to raise their levels of performance.

Schools value this approach to monitoring their performance. They feel that the work, and in particular the autumn term review of performance, is effective in helping them to become better at evaluating their own performance. Overall, schools value the work of the SLOs, whom they perceive as being well-prepared for meetings. However, SLOs do not have a clear enough grasp of the quality of teaching and learning in schools, though there are plans to address this shortcoming. From spring 2006, the authority is introducing a four-year rolling programme for monitoring teaching and learning in the non-core foundation subjects with a particular focus on years 5 to 8. This is intended to support schools in developing their own self-evaluation procedures.

Challenge and intervention

Following a pilot project, the authority established a new strategy for challenging its schools in September 2004. The strategy is firmly based on the relative performance of schools. Schools have a clear understanding of the approach and perceive the authority to be effective in challenging them to do better. The strategy ensures that support is differentiated according to performance and is targeted at those schools
with the greatest need. The authority has carefully evaluated the first year of the new approach and has made appropriate adjustments to it.

The system initially classifies schools into four groups, based on their performance in relation to similar schools across Wales over the last three years. The authority then considers a range of contextual and other performance information, such as the proportion of pupils with SEN and value-added measures, before allocating the school to a particular group. Schools in the group that needs most support are required to produce a ‘raising achievement plan’. The SIO produces the plan with support from the SLO and involves the governing body. These plans are detailed and focus on the key issues that the school needs to address. The implementation of the plan is monitored by a designated SIO. At present, schools are not clear enough about the distinction between the roles of the SLO and the SIO, but this issue should be resolved once the service has been re-structured.

Support

Support is well planned and targeted at those schools that have been identified as needing most support. In 2003, two Powys schools were identified as having serious weaknesses. Following good support from the authority, both these schools have been moved from the list of schools with serious weaknesses.

In addition, the authority provides a wide range of support activities that are designed to meet the priorities in the ESP. There is effective support for literacy, numeracy, Welsh and ICT, as well as for a range of other local or national initiatives such as education for sustainable development and global citizenship, assessment for learning, and transition between key stage 2 and key stage 3. Support for literacy and numeracy through a Basic Skills Agency grant is well targeted at schools with greatest need. From September 2004, the authority introduced procedures to support joint working between schools in each secondary catchment area. All groups have established appropriate training programmes that focus on teaching and learning.

The authority is providing effective support for helping schools to develop their own self-evaluation procedures. The new annual review system helps schools to become more reflective about their performance and to review their procedures for self-evaluation and planning for improvement. The authority is producing appropriate guidance for schools on how to develop self-evaluation in primary schools. It is working effectively with another authority service to develop guidance and support for secondary schools.

The school improvement service provides a good range of expertise to support primary schools, but the range of expertise in secondary schools is limited. The authority has used appropriately qualified and experienced external consultants to fill a number of gaps in expertise at both primary and secondary level.

There are appropriate consultative arrangements for planning the authority’s programme for the Better Schools Fund. The authority produces a catalogue of courses available to schools. There is a good range of courses in literacy, numeracy,
Welsh and ICT, but there is inconsistent provision for other subjects and other aspects of the work of schools.

The authority has produced a wide range of useful support materials that often develop from the work of groups of teachers and officers, including:

- model schemes of work in an electronic form for primary schools;
- assessment materials for key stage 2;
- local history resources; and
- Welsh-medium materials for dyslexia.

Overall schools rate highly the quality of the authority’s support, including the materials and training courses. Secondary school staff express the view that the authority does not have enough expertise in their sector, but they are aware of the authority’s plans to remedy this shortcoming. Similarly, schools see shortcomings in the authority’s work in promoting good practice, but they are aware of plans to remedy this as well. The authority’s plans to address these two shortcomings are clear and there are sufficient resources to carry them out.

**Support for leaders and managers**

The authority provides a range of activities to support school leaders and managers, including a programme of meetings and an annual conference. There is appropriate provision for the headship leadership programme. The authority also provides effective and good-quality training and development opportunities for middle managers in schools through the school leadership modules programme for primary schools and the accredited middle managers course for secondary schools.

**Support for governors**

Governors play an increasingly important role in developing the school improvement strategy. The involvement of governors in the annual review process conducted by SLOs has helped governors to increase their role in their own schools. Where schools have been identified as being a cause for concern, governors are well informed and, are fully involved in developing and monitoring the raising achievement plan.

There is an established process for consultation on key matters, such as the content of the ESP and other plans, through the governors’ consultative committee. A sub-group of the committee plans the governors’ training programme. The authority has a wide-ranging programme of governors’ training events. Governors judge these to be of high quality, but overall not many governors attend the courses. Governors value the individual support that they and their schools receive from officers through visits, contacts and training events designed specifically for their own governing body.
How does performance compare?

At all key stages over a number of years, Powys pupils have performed above the national averages, but the gap is closing. In 2005, the authority was in the top four authorities in Wales for all key indicators except for the proportion of pupils who leave school without a recognised qualification, for which the authority was in eighth place.

The aggregate performance of Powys schools is as expected when compared with similar schools elsewhere in Wales. When the performance of individual schools is considered, there are more schools than expected in the highest quarter in key stage 1 and 2, and in the proportion of pupils gaining five GCSE grades at A*-C at the end of key stage 4. However, there are:

- more schools than expected in the bottom quarter in key stages 1 and 2, and in the proportion of pupils gaining five GCSE grades at A*-G;
- more schools than expected below the median in key stage 3; and
- fewer schools than expected in the top quarter at key stage 3 and for the proportion of pupils gaining five GCSE grades at A*-G.

Schools overall have performed well in Estyn inspections. In the period from 1998 to 2004, standards were judged to be good or better in over half the classes in 96% of schools. In the previous six-year period, just under a third of schools achieved this criterion.

Just over two-fifths of schools completed the annual Audit Commission Schools’ Perception Survey in 2005. Schools rated the authority’s support for school improvement as being between satisfactory and good in 16 of the 18 categories in the relevant section of the questionnaire. It was rated as being between satisfactory and poor in relation to dissemination of good practice and 14-19 provision. The survey also contained nine questions on school improvement posed by the authority itself. The schools rated the authority’s work as between satisfactory and good on eight of these questions and between good and very good for the encouragement to work together as a cluster.

In comparison with all other participating authorities, the authority was placed in the bottom quarter for 14 of the 18 categories. The remaining four categories (definition of monitoring, support and intervention, ICT support, financial information, and support for schools’ use of performance data) the authority was placed above the bottom quarter but below the top quarter.

In discussion with headteachers it is clear that this relatively negative view of the authority’s performance is no longer their view of the authority’s work. When the survey was completed in July, the group director of CFLL was about to leave and schools’ confidence in the authority was low. In addition, the new strategy for challenging schools and providing differentiated support had not become fully embedded. At the time of the inspection, schools expressed confidence and trust in the authority’s approach and work in supporting school improvement.
The authority participates actively in national benchmarking clubs. The service uses performance information to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of its work. It collects and analyses data on the services it provides, and monitors and evaluates its performance against clearly-identified performance indicators. The collection and provision of benchmarks on financial and resource management for schools’ use is underdeveloped.
5. Findings: Support for school improvement
Will the LEA’s performance improve?

Is the authority’s self-evaluation process likely to drive improvement?

The education directorate has established a firm tradition of conducting thorough reviews of its services and functions. The self-evaluation of its support for school improvement is thorough and appropriately self-critical where necessary. The review has drawn effectively and comprehensively on the WAO/ADEW/Estyn self-evaluation criteria. As a result, the authority has identified an appropriate range of areas for development which are addressed in the action plan that resulted from the review.

Senior officers led the review and it involved an appropriately broad range of those who deliver and receive education services. Elected members, headteachers and governors all played a valuable role in considering and challenging the findings of the review. The authority made good use of an external consultant to provide a further challenge and to ensure that the views of schools were fully considered.

The school improvement service is continually reviewing its arrangements for procurement and the efficiency of the delivery of the service. There are specific plans to improve the effectiveness of the service level agreement for training. This will ensure more effective use of staff and so provide better value for money.

Headteachers are committed to issues that have been identified as needing improvement. Regular meetings enable primary and secondary headteachers to discuss relevant issues with the authority. The consultation system helps to promote a common understanding of the responsibilities of the service. Officers have worked effectively to build up a climate of mutual trust and respect between officers and stakeholders, including headteachers. In general, schools appreciate the opportunities to take part in planning and monitoring service developments. However, school staff tend to have a limited awareness of the authority’s overall priorities and of the role of elected members.

How good is the improvement plan?

The authority’s self-evaluation of its support for school improvement has identified all the important areas for development as well as other less significant issues. The improvement plan is comprehensive and is incorporated fully into the business planning cycle. The plan has specific targets, and outlines the actions required for improvements showing costs, dates for completion, the named person responsible for taking each action and the required outcome. Schools confirm that the improvements identified in the self-evaluation report are appropriate and they are confident that it will lead to further improvements in the effectiveness of the service.

Across the authority as a whole, procedures for routine scrutiny by elected members are underdeveloped. At present there is no work programme in place for the scrutiny function. Members have not been trained in the generic scrutiny skills that are needed to challenge proposed decisions.
The implementation of performance management in the school improvement service is having a positive impact because procedures are consistently applied and promote a culture of self-review and action planning. The authority provides useful and timely information to members about school improvement matters. The head of school improvement meets the board member with responsibility for education regularly. The lead member for education has a firm understanding of key priorities and what needs to be done. There is appropriate member representation on both the review group and the school improvement steering group. There are well-focused pre-agenda meetings before the CFLL committee meeting and there are standing items on the agenda about schools that cause concern and the directorate’s progress on the identified critical issues. Officers and the lead members work effectively together. Overall, members have a good understanding of the school improvement strategy.

**Will the authority deliver the improvements?**

The chief executive, senior officers and members are clear about the strengths and weaknesses of the ‘support for school improvement’ service and what needs to be done to put it right. They are committed to making the necessary improvements to the service. The planned re-structuring of the school improvement service has freed up the funding necessary to put the improvements into place. Education is the second main priority for the authority and the proposed corporate re-structuring is not likely to lead to any reduction of the role and status of education within the authority.

The interim director of education and the head of school improvement provide a high quality of leadership. They have a clear vision of how the service should develop and have been successful in earning the commitment of the school improvement team and of members. The directorate’s senior management team regularly discusses critical issues and the development of the school improvement service. As the interim director is due to leave her post in March 2006, there is potential for lack of continuity in the quality of leadership of the directorate, although there will be no change in the leadership of the school improvement service.

The authority has a good track record of making improvements in supporting school improvement and securing positive outcomes. It provided effective support in helping to remove two schools from Estyn’s serious weaknesses category. Action plans following Estyn inspections that are concerned with school improvement, such as those on literacy, numeracy, ICT, Welsh-medium education and early years, are progressing well. The action plan on access to education is being implemented as intended. There has not been enough progress on the action plan that followed the inspection of SEN. However, the authority is taking action to address this through the new SEN review that is due to be completed by April 2006 and resulting proposals should be implemented from September 2006.

Overall, the authority has a satisfactory record of financial management. It takes a prudent approach to its finances and has built up adequate levels of reserves. Budget management and control are generally effective.

However, the authority intends to make cuts and additional efficiency savings across all its service and functions in 2006-2007. Schools’ funding is likely to be part of this
budget review. The authority has not assessed the implications of the budget review for individual schools’ ability to respond to the new challenges set by the authority.

The authority has begun to take action to challenge schools in deficit and progress has been made since 2003-2004. Until recently, SLOs have not challenged consistently either those schools in deficit or those with significant unplanned surpluses, but there are plans to do so in the meetings to be held in the spring of 2006.
### Appendix 1

#### The inspection team

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<th>Name</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Role</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nigel Vaughan HMI</td>
<td>Estyn</td>
<td>Reporting Inspector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arwyn Thomas HMI</td>
<td>Estyn</td>
<td>Team Inspector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terry Williams AI</td>
<td>Estyn</td>
<td>Team Inspector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex Orme</td>
<td>WAO</td>
<td>Team Inspector</td>
</tr>
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