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Her Majesty's Inspectorate  
for Education and Training in Wales



WALES **AUDIT** OFFICE  
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# **Quality and standards in education and training in Wales**

**A report on the quality of**

**Denbighshire  
Local Authority**

**March 2009**

**by**

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

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- ▲ 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;
- ▲ local authority education services (LAES);
- ▲ 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.

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## Context

### The inspection

- 1 This inspection took place from 16 March 2009 to 27 March 2009. This report focuses on the education services and youth support services provided by Denbighshire County Council (the authority). Before the inspection, the authority undertook a review of its services and produced a self-evaluation report as a part of its own review process.

### Local authority education services

- 2 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](http://www.estyn.co.uk)

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

Grade 1 good with outstanding features (\*\*\*)

Grade 2 good features and no important shortcomings (\*\*)

Grade 3 good features outweigh shortcomings (\*)

Grade 4 shortcomings in important areas

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

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

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

Grade 2 improvement prospects are good, with no major barriers

Grade 3 some good prospects, but barriers in important areas

Grade 4 many important barriers to improvement

## Key questions

- 6 In order to make the two key judgements, inspectors evaluate the authority's performance in relation to each of four key questions:
- 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?
- 7 These four key questions and the evaluations are set out in the findings section. They are recorded as grades, using the four-point scales set out at (4) and (5) above. All of the grades are included in the grade profile.

## Youth support services re-inspection

- 8 Youth support services in Denbighshire were inspected in 2006. This inspection was undertaken in accordance with the inspection framework for youth support services and under the legislation in the Learning and Skills Act 2000. In order to make judgements, inspectors evaluate the services' performance in relation to each of the seven key questions as follows:

1	How well do learners achieve?
2	How effective are teaching, training and assessment?
3	How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?
4	How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?
5	How effective are leadership and strategic management?
6	How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?
7	How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?

- 9 The five-point scale used to represent youth support services inspection judgements in this report is as follows:

<b>Grade 1</b>	good with outstanding features
<b>Grade 2</b>	good features and no important shortcomings
<b>Grade 3</b>	good features outweigh shortcomings
<b>Grade 4</b>	some good features, but shortcomings in important areas
<b>Grade 5</b>	many important shortcomings

- 10 In the 2006 inspection, the inspection team awarded grade 4, some good features, but shortcomings in important areas, to Key Questions 3, and grade 5, many important shortcomings, for Key Question 5.
- 11 As a result of the above grades falling below the quality threshold, a re-inspection resulted of Key Questions 3 and 5 and progress against recommendations from the inspection.

- 12 The arrangements for the re-inspection are set out in the relevant sector guidance which is available on the Estyn website [www.estyn.gov.uk](http://www.estyn.gov.uk)
- 13 The re-inspection report includes an evaluation of the provider's progress in meeting the recommendations from the last inspection and a re-grading of the key questions being re-inspected.
- 14 Estyn's reports follow its guidance for the writing and editing of reports, which is available on the Estyn website ([www.estyn.gov.uk](http://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.

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

## Background to the local authority

- 15 Denbighshire is largely a rural county in North Wales, with a population of 97,000. It contains some of the most prosperous areas within Wales along with some of the most deprived. It covers an area which runs from the North Wales coastal resorts of Rhyl and Prestatyn down through the Vale of Clwyd, south as far as Corwen and Llangollen. Around a quarter of the overall population speaks Welsh but this rises to over 60% in some rural areas.
- 16 Service industries and tourism are the main employers in Denbighshire. Together, these groups provide for around 64% of all jobs. Manufacturing provides 13% and agriculture accounts for a further 3%.
- 17 Denbighshire has 62.4% of its working-age adults economically active compared with 61.0% for Wales. The proportion of self-employed workers (9.8%) is higher than that in Wales (7.7%). A quarter of the workforce is partly skilled or unskilled. The unemployment rate in the County is 4.2%, compared with 4.3% for Wales as a whole. A high level of seasonal employment is the main cause of the transient school population in one area in Rhyl.

### Political structure

- 18 After the elections in May 2008 a new council was formed. The council leader is a member of the Independent Group but there is no overall political control. Members are distributed as follows:
- Independents - 10 members;
  - Conservative - 18 members;
  - Independent First - 3 members;
  - Labour - 7 members;
  - Plaid Cymru - 8 members; and
  - Independent (Welsh Liberal Democrat) - 1 member.

### Authority structure

- 19 The authority is made up of four directorates, each one led by a corporate director. The four directors each have responsibility for one the following areas:
- resources;
  - environment;
  - social services and housing; and
  - lifelong learning.

- 20 The Lifelong Learning Directorate currently consists of five service areas:
- School Improvement;
  - Partnership and Inclusion;
  - Planning and Performance;
  - Library Services; and
  - Leisure Services.
- 21 Every member of the current Directorate Management Team (DMT) with responsibility for education has been appointed since the Estyn inspection in 2007.
- 22 The new Corporate Director for Lifelong Learning started in March 2009. Previously the position of Corporate Director of Lifelong Learning had been filled by an interim director since November 2007. An interim manager has acted as Head of School Improvement and, since the permanent appointment of a Head of School Improvement, as Head of Partnership and Inclusion. With the exception of the new Lead School Improvement Officer (ALN/Inclusion), all senior officer posts in Lifelong Learning are now permanent appointments.

### **Schools and pupils**

- 23 In Denbighshire, there are 53 primary schools, eight secondary schools, two special schools and special units in five primary schools. Together, these schools serve a population of just under 16,000 pupils.
- 24 Primary schools vary greatly in size. Just over a quarter of them (26%), mostly situated in the coastal areas of Rhyl and Prestatyn, have over 200 pupils. Sixty per cent of all primary school pupils attend these larger schools. In contrast, almost half of the primary schools have fewer than 100 pupils, including 13 that have fewer than 50 pupils. These smaller schools, though many in number, serve only 16% of the pupil population. The numbers on roll in secondary schools range from 354 pupils to 1,788. Two of the eight secondary schools have fewer than 500 pupils. There are 275 pupils in the two special schools. The proportion of pupils of statutory school age entitled to free schools meals in Denbighshire is 14.7%, which is below the January 2008 average for Wales (17.05%).
- 25 The profile of special educational needs in the authority has not changed significantly since the last inspection in 2007.
- 26 About one-fifth of the pupils in the authority's schools have special educational needs (SEN)<sup>1</sup>. The profile of need is broadly similar to the all-Wales picture, except that the proportion of school-aged children with SEN who have speech, language and communication difficulties, including those with autistic spectrum disorder, is almost twice that found nationally.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Pupil Level Annual School Census Data, January 2008: Local Government Data Unit for Wales, October 2008

- 27 The proportion of pupils with statements<sup>2</sup> has reduced steadily in the last five years and is now 3.04%, almost matching the national average of 3.06%. The authority educates a relatively high proportion of pupils with statements of SEN in special schools, and a correspondingly low proportion in special classes or units in mainstream schools. The school placement of pupils with statements of SEN in January 2008 was:

School placement for pupils with SEN	Percentage (Authority)	Percentage (Wales)
Mainstream schools (ordinary classes)	51.2	49.7
Mainstream schools (special classes or units)	7.4	20.0
Maintained special schools	38.6	25.6
Independent and non-maintained special schools	1.7	2.4
Pupil referral units/other than at school	1.2	2.4

- 28 There are 362 pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL). There are 45 different home languages, of which the most common is Tagalog, which is spoken in the Philippines.

### Partnership arrangements

- 29 The Children and Young People's Partnership has restructured since the last inspection of youth support services in May 2006. The partnership and its sub-groups provide strategic leadership, management and planning of children and young people's services, including youth support services. In particular, the Extending Entitlement sub-group has responsibility to ensure the delivery of appropriate and accessible services for young people. This report will use the term 'partnership' to refer to the overall governance and delivery structure.
- 30 The Children and Young People's Plan (CYP Plan), covering the period 2008 to 2011, governs the work of the partnership. The partnership support team, within the Social Services and Housing Directorate, supports the work of the partnership.

### Funding

- 31 The Welsh Assembly Government's Standard Spending Assessment (SSA)<sup>3</sup> per head of population for Denbighshire County Council for 2008-2009 was above the average for local authorities in Wales. However, the education component of SSA (the education Indicator-Based Assessment (IBA)<sup>4</sup>) was below the Wales average. At £69.7 million, the education IBA represented £4,397 for each pupil in Denbighshire schools compared with the Wales average of £4,485 per pupil.
- 32 During the last five years, the authority has increased its net education per pupil by 31.5%, a larger increase than in any other local authority in Wales. In 2008-2009,

<sup>2</sup> Source: Pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs, January 2006: SDR 79/2007, National Assembly for Wales, June 2007

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

<sup>4</sup> Education IBA is that part of SSA relating to the delivery of education services.

the authority set the education budget at a level of 100.1% of IBA<sup>5</sup>, yielding a net education budget per pupil of £4,401 compared with an average of £4,472 for Wales as a whole. In contrast to the education budget, the authority's overall level of spending on all services has been well above the level of SSA every year since 2004-2005.

- 33 Denbighshire's net education budget for 2008-2009 increased by 5.6% compared with an average 3.3% increase across Wales. The increase of £3.7 million includes £2.3 million in schools' delegated budgets, £1.45 million of which represents new funding targeted at specific priorities. Delegated budgets per pupil (including grants) for schools have gradually increased relative to those in other authorities but they remain well below average. At £3,241 per pupil in 2008-2009, average primary school delegated budgets are fifth lowest among local authorities in Wales. Average secondary school delegated budgets per pupil amount to £3,846 per pupil, the fourth lowest in Wales.
- 34 The authority has invested about £34.5 million in capital expenditure on education over the four years to 2007-2008. This represents over £2,100 per pupil, third highest in Wales.

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<sup>5</sup> Education IBA is not intended as a spending target and authorities are free to spend at levels above or below IBA, in accordance with their priorities.

## Summary

### Local authority education services

	2009	
	How good is the local authority's performance?	Will the local authority's performance improve?
<b>Strategic management</b>	3	3
<b>Support for school improvement</b>	3	3
<b>Promoting social inclusion and wellbeing</b>	2	2
<b>Additional learning needs (ALN)</b>	2	2
<b>Access and school organisation</b>	3	3
<b>Support services</b>	4	3

### Strategic management

- 35 Overall, the progress and pace of education service improvement have been good. In some instances, this improvement has been from a very low base. Education is now clearly a high-level priority for the authority. Difficult decisions have been taken to ensure that there is now a strong platform to secure further improvements. Senior political and officer leadership is now effective. There are also examples of good and sometimes very good leadership of service teams. As a result, education services have a range of good features. However, the authority still faces significant challenges. These include:
- 1 raising standards in schools, especially at key stage 4;
  - 2 embedding planning and performance management systems;
  - 3 modernising school buildings; and
  - 4 improving the quality of support services to schools.
- 36 The accountability for performance of schools, officers and services is generally good. This improved accountability through the Lifelong Learning scrutiny committee, the Modernising Education Board and Schools Standards Monitoring Group is a good platform for more effective decision-making. There is now a developing culture of appropriate support and challenge. Resources are better targeted to deliver clear outcomes.
- 37 Consultation, communication and engagement are generally good. Relationships with schools have improved significantly and are no longer a barrier to improving services and performance.
- 38 There are good strategic systems for planning and performance management arrangements. However, these systems are not yet embedded at service level.

- 39 Good strategic and operational work is now developing between social services and education. There are clear procedures for the management of child protection referrals and good work to develop a quality assurance framework for safeguarding children in education.
- 40 The performance of learners, especially at key stage 4, is below what might be expected. At present, there is not an agreed published strategy to tackle underperformance through effective and efficient joint working between school improvement, ALN, Inclusion, Children's Services, other directorates, schools and external partners. This is a barrier to jointly identifying and delivering mid-term and long-term priorities to tackle underperformance.
- 41 The authority has begun to implement plans to address the recommendations in the Wales Audit Office Corporate Governance report but as yet they are at an early stage of development.

### **Support for school improvement**

- 42 In a relatively short period of time, the school improvement service has made good progress in putting systems in place to address issues identified in the last inspection. However, these systems have not yet had enough impact on the trend of underperformance.
- 43 At key stage 4, Denbighshire remains one of the lowest performing authorities across Wales on most indicators. This is an important shortcoming. At key stage 3, the performance of secondary schools is below the average for Wales. The overall performance of primary schools in Denbighshire has improved since 2006 and the percentage of pupils in key stage 2 gaining the Core Subject Indicator (CSI) is now above the average for Wales.
- 44 There are clear procedures through the Partnership Agreement<sup>6</sup> to monitor, support, challenge and intervene in schools. Officers place schools into one of five categories and target resources effectively at those identified as causing concern.
- 45 Officers have a clear programme of monitoring visits to schools based on agreed agendas and a focus on areas in need of improvement. However, the quality of written records of visits to schools is variable and the use made of them by officers is not consistent enough to enable all schools to know how to improve. The authority has not identified the need for a formal process to ensure that individual officers bring an effective and consistent challenge to schools or do enough to build the capacity of schools to improve themselves.
- 46 Schools receive a good range of performance data. School improvement officers generally use this data effectively to understand how well schools perform. Officers prepare annual performance reports and present these to the governing body of each school. This helps inform governors of how well their school is performing.
- 47 There is a range of appropriate initiatives to address local and national priorities. Support for schools in introducing the Foundation Phase and the work of the

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<sup>6</sup> A Partnership Agreement is defined as an agreement about how the LEA and the governing body of a school will act to discharge their respective functions in relation to the school.

Athrawon Bro are very effective. There is good support for literacy and good initial progress in support for numeracy. Good progress has been made in improving choice and opportunity for 14 to 19-year-olds.

- 48 The authority has recently targeted the work of Curriculum Support advisers on improving performance in secondary schools. However, there is variation in the quality of support and advice provided and headteachers are not clear about their entitlement to other support to address the school's own priorities. In addition, support through the medium of Welsh is limited.

### **Promoting social inclusion and wellbeing**

- 49 The quality of services to promote the social inclusion and wellbeing of all pupils and young people is now good. The senior staff responsible for these services show strong leadership and implement good strategic approaches to secure improvements. They work well with schools and other partners.
- 50 The Authority makes good provision for excluded pupils or those at risk of exclusion. The EOTAS<sup>7</sup> service works well with schools and other partners to make sure there is a variety of good provision to address the needs of individual pupils.
- 51 Officers and members work well together to support looked after children (LAC) at school. The authority gives good support to specific projects to help vulnerable pupils achieve well at school. However, it does not pull together information about the outcomes of this provision well enough to monitor its overall effectiveness.
- 52 The Education Welfare Service is good. It works effectively with schools. As a result, attendance at both secondary and primary schools has increased significantly between 2005 and 2008<sup>8</sup>.
- 53 There are effective services to help schools promote good behaviour. These services have increased the capacity to provide efficient help for mainstream schools. The authority has worked well with schools to reduce permanent exclusions and the length of fixed-term exclusions.

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

- 54 There are many consistently good and some very good features in the authority's support and provision for learners with special educational needs (SEN) and for those with English as an additional language (EAL).
- 55 The authority continues to meet the statutory requirements of the SEN and Disability Act (2001) efficiently and effectively. The authority provides high-quality professional advice and support for children and young people with the full range of ALN. Support and provision are bilingual.
- 56 Provision for learners with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties has improved significantly and is now very good.

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<sup>7</sup> Educated other than at school

<sup>8</sup> See Appendix 1

- 57 There are clear and appropriate arrangements for identifying and assessing the needs of pre-school children and for providing early support in partnership with local child health and social services.
- 58 The authority has increased the capacity of mainstream schools to identify and meet pupils' needs at an early stage, and as a result has reduced the number of pupils whose unmet learning needs contribute to behavioural and emotional difficulties.
- 59 The authority's services for children and young people with speech, language and communication difficulties including those with autistic spectrum disorder continue to have outstanding features.
- 60 There is good support for parents and carers. Parents receive good quality information and timely support from officers who are responsive to their queries and concerns. However, the lack of a publicly available directory of services can slow down parents' access to initial advice and support.
- 61 The ongoing uncertainty about the timescales for securing permanent leadership arrangements in the authority's residential special school has the potential to hinder the rate of improvement in SEN provision in the immediate future.

### **Access and school organisation**

- 62 Although surplus capacity is low, there remain areas of concern. These include: a lack of sufficient Welsh-medium provision in the coastal urban area; too much surplus capacity in small rural schools; some large primary schools that are close to or overcapacity; and curricular and financial impact of small sixth forms.
- 63 Consultation and communication with stakeholders to develop the Modernising Education Policy Framework (MEPF) was very good. Purposeful consultation between authority departments and all stakeholders has helped to develop a general understanding that the authority needs to make changes.
- 64 Four area reviews are under way, as proposed in the Modernising Education Policy Framework. The first of these has resulted in the agreement to close the sixth forms at Rhyl High School and Blessed Edward Jones High School, to be replaced by the delivery of post-16 education and training by Coleg Llandrillo Rhyl.
- 65 There is no agreed clear capital investment strategy for schools. However, consistent and rigorous project management has improved the quality of decision making with regard to the prioritisation of capital projects. Despite a high level of capital investment in recent years, there remains a considerable maintenance backlog in schools. The authority now has extensive, accurate and up-to-date information about its schools' condition, sufficiency and suitability to inform priorities.
- 66 The home-to-school transport service is generally reliable and effective.
- 67 There is effective co-ordination of early years provision in the maintained and non-maintained settings, including support for ALN.

## Support services

- 68 There are many important shortcomings in the way in which the authority secures effective support services for its schools. The authority has provided too little support to schools to help them make wise choices when buying support services. The services that the authority provides to schools have also been slow to develop an approach that treats schools as customers. These are important shortcomings.
- 69 New service level agreements (SLA) are in place from April 2009 and cover a number of different service areas. These are consistent in format but do not yet distinguish appropriately between work that the authority must carry out on behalf of all schools, including its monitoring role, and work that schools might legitimately carry out themselves or procure from another source.
- 70 The authority has recognised that there are shortcomings in its approach to delivering support services and has begun to act on this. Officers within the Lifelong Learning Directorate have worked effectively to bring schools and service providers together to analyse problems and to redesign SLAs.
- 71 Despite these early signs of progress, overall arrangements remain untested in terms of their ability to secure high quality, cost-effective support services while ensuring the authority's ability to fulfil its core functions, including an appropriate level of monitoring in schools.

## Youth support services re-inspection

	2009
<b>Key Question 3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Key Question 5</b>	<b>3</b>

- 72 Overall, the partnership has made satisfactory progress against the recommendations from the inspection of youth support services in 2006. There has been good or better progress against four recommendations, adequate progress against six and poor progress against three recommendations
- 73 The partnership is now more effective and has amended its membership. Most elected members, officers and partners understand the role of the partnership and their responsibility to co-ordinate youth support services. The Children and Young People's Plan (CYP Plan) identifies clear priorities. Performance management systems, including local authority scrutiny arrangements, are robust but have not been in place long enough to improve outcomes or the range and quality of youth support services. The partnership still does not have a good enough overview of youth support services or the outcomes that young people achieve.
- 74 Young people who access youth support services have good opportunities to voice their opinion and are able to influence partnership priorities. However, there are still gaps in provision including Welsh-medium services, support for 16 to 25-year-olds and youth services in rural areas. The partnership does not plan well enough to co-ordinate information services or basic skills support for young people outside formal education settings.

## Recommendations

- 75 In order to build upon the existing good progress, the authority should:
- R1 raise attainment and achievement, especially at key stage 4 through partnership working with schools;
  - R2 agree and implement a strategy to identify mid-term and long-term priorities that will tackle underperformance and ensure effective and efficient joint working between school improvement, ALN, Inclusion, Children's Services, other directorates, schools and external partners;
  - R3 ensure that resources are prioritised, targeted and have maximum impact by developing and embedding business planning and effective monitoring and evaluation of plans;
  - R4 use the agreed framework for managing school places and the emerging area reviews to drive the modernisation process forward;
  - R5 develop the capacity of schools as effective purchasers of support services, including curriculum support; and
  - R6 work with schools and all authority service providers to:
    - distinguish clearly between those functions that schools may choose to buy from the authority and those aspects that the authority must provide itself, including its monitoring role; and
    - clarify and delegate to schools the cost of providing the optional elements.
- 76 The Children and Young People's Partnership should:
- R7 improve the use of information and data at a strategic level to evaluate, improve and increase provision that meets the needs of young people across the area and to address the gaps in services identified in 2006; and
  - R8 hold partners to account for their performance by setting clear objectives and targets and embedding planning and performance management arrangements.

## **Findings: How good is the local authority's performance?**

### **Strategic management**

#### **Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings**

- 77 Overall, the progress and pace of improvements to the education service have been good. In some instances this improvement has been from a very low base. There has been significant improvement in leadership at all levels in the authority. As a result, most elements of the education service have a range of good features. However, the authority still faces significant challenges. These include continuing to raise standards in schools, especially at key stage 4, embedding planning and performance management systems, modernising school buildings and improving the quality of support services to schools.
- 78 The recently approved statement of intent by elected members sets out clearly the vision for the local authority. In September 2008 the authority approved four priority areas. These priorities reflect the Authority's Improvement Plan that was approved in October 2008. However, work is still ongoing to define these priorities more explicitly so that they can fully influence planning. In addition, these plans are not fully aligned to one another.
- 79 Senior political and officer leadership is now effective. Education is now clearly a priority for the authority. Elected members have a clear vision for the role of education in Denbighshire and are clear about the outcomes for the Modernising Education priority. The present Leader of the authority, in addition to his wider responsibilities as Leader, undertakes very effectively the role of Lead Member for Education to emphasise its importance. The Leader also acknowledges the need to progress further development opportunities for elected members. The authority has taken difficult decisions to ensure that there is now a strong platform to secure further improvements.
- 80 The interim Corporate Director for Lifelong Learning has been a key factor in the authority's improvement journey. He has made a number of changes and introduced systems that have brought a sense of rigour and direction to planning, monitoring and evaluating service delivery. However, these are not fully embedded consistently at service level. There are also examples of good and sometimes very good leadership of service teams.
- 81 The accountability for the performance of schools and officers is generally clear. This is achieved through effective, well-planned scrutiny by elected members. Members and officers work together effectively to monitor and evaluate performance through the work of the Modernising Education Board and Schools Standards Monitoring Group. This improved accountability provides a good platform for more effective decision-making. There is now a developing culture of appropriate support and meaningful challenge, both within the authority and between the authority and its schools. As a result, resources are now being better targeted to deliver clear outcomes.

- 82 Good work, both strategic and operational, is developing between social services and education. There are clear procedures for the management of child protection referrals and there has been good work to develop a quality assurance framework for safeguarding children in education. However, there is a lack of clarity as far as a few senior managers in schools' full understanding of their responsibilities in safeguarding children in education.
- 83 Strategic partnership working is stronger than it was in 2007. The local authority and its partners understand what they need to achieve through the work of key groups such as the Children and Young People's Partnership. Membership of these is at an appropriately strategic level and elected members contribute effectively to establish a clear vision. However, most partnerships are still at an early stage. Analysis of underperformance and gaps in provision and outcomes does not sufficiently inform partnership working. Planning has not yet had a significant impact on service delivery.
- 84 There is good collaboration with other local authorities across North Wales and increasing numbers of services are shared. The local authority works effectively with a range of partners at an operational level. For example, there is very good joint working between education, social services and the health service to provide speech and language support.

### **Use of resources**

- 85 The increased allocation of funding to education reflects the authority's commitment to improving the service. Schools' delegated budgets have increased relative to other authorities, though they remain well below average for Wales. The authority has also invested significantly in improving the leadership of education services and in increasing capacity in the planning and delivery of capital projects.
- 86 Financial management within the Lifelong Learning Directorate is satisfactory, and is well supported by the corporate finance section. There remain some areas of budgetary pressure within the education budget, notably in relation to ALN provision and school meals.
- 87 There have been improvements in the arrangements for the distribution and monitoring of grant funding. Fewer core posts within the authority are now dependent on grant funding, and there are better arrangements in place to ensure that grants devolved to schools are being used appropriately.
- 88 There has been some progress in addressing recommendations on the use of resources from the 2007 inspection but further work is necessary. The authority has worked closely with its schools to review the arrangements for funding special educational needs in mainstream and special schools.
- 89 There is a need to clarify the extent to which internal charges within the authority form a part of the education budget, and set out clearly the funding for inspection and advisory services between central budgets and schools' delegated budgets.

<b>Support for school improvement</b> <b>Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings</b>
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### **School performance**

- 90 At key stage 4, performance of Denbighshire schools has improved at a faster rate than the Wales average over recent years on most indicators. However, Denbighshire remains one of the lowest performing authorities across Wales on most indicators. On four of the indicators at key stage 4, half of all secondary schools are in the bottom quarter. At key stage 3, the performance of secondary schools is below the average for Wales. The overall performance of primary schools in Denbighshire has improved since 2006 and the percentage of pupils in key stage 2 gaining the Core Subject Indicator (CSI) is now above the average for Wales.

### **Support, monitoring, challenge and intervention**

- 91 The authority has clear procedures, through the Partnership Agreement, for monitoring, support, challenge and intervention in its schools. Officers use a range of performance data and other information to place schools into one of five categories which trigger support in proportion to need. This enables the authority to target its resources more effectively on those schools identified as causing concern. In addition, the authority has recently developed a useful electronic database to track interventions in each school.
- 92 The authority provides schools with a good range of performance data, including comparisons with schools that have pupils from similar socio-economic backgrounds across Wales. Secondary schools share analyses of performance openly. This includes comparative data at department level. There is no formal system for the sharing of data on the performance of primary schools. School improvement officers receive summary data for each school, including contextual data and information from inclusion and additional learning needs services. In general, these officers understand well how their schools perform.
- 93 School improvement officers produce an annual report for governors that they present at a meeting of the governing body. These reports have improved governors' understanding of the performance of schools. However, not all governing bodies are fully aware of the category of their school or the possible implication of their schools' category. This is a shortcoming.
- 94 Officers have a clear programme of monitoring visits to schools with agreed agendas and a focus on areas in need of improvement. In the autumn term, officers review each school's performance, negotiate targets and discuss priorities highlighted in the school's own self evaluation. In other visits they review the progress made in addressing these priorities. The authority is making use of a good range of consultants to help secondary schools in the highest categories of concern and to provide training on teaching and learning for all primary and secondary teachers.
- 95 The quality of written records of visits to schools is variable, especially in terms of providing a clear record of issues in need of attention. Officers do not always send records of visits to schools to summarise agreed actions and to provide a basis for follow up at the next visit. Officers are not helping schools well enough to broker support from elsewhere when the authority does not have the necessary expertise.

## Curriculum support

- 96 The authority has provided schools, governors and officers with an extensive programme of well-received training in support of the delivery of the foundation phase. The authority works well with a range of partners to effectively support schools and non-maintained settings to implement these.
- 97 There is good support for literacy at all key stages including effective intervention programmes to improve pupils' basic skills. The recently appointed numeracy officer has made good progress in identifying schools in need of additional support.
- 98 The authority's 14-19 partnership is making good progress in extending the range of courses offered in its secondary schools in collaboration with local colleges and work-based learning providers. However, as yet, there are limited Welsh-medium options.
- 99 The authority has provided schools with useful support for the moderation of teacher assessment (TA) in literacy at the end of key stage 2. This support is not yet as well developed in mathematics and science. All schools do not receive enough annual feedback on the quality of their TA following the moderation process.
- 100 There is increasing awareness in the authority's schools of the need to address issues relating to the delivery of Welsh second language at key stage 4. However, overall progress over the last three years has been slow. Around a third of the cohort did not gain a recognised qualification in Welsh at the end of key stage 4 in 2008. Furthermore, nearly half of pupils studying Welsh as a second language were not entered for the full GCSE examination. There are no agreed targets that challenge schools to tackle these issues.
- 101 The authority has recently targeted the work of Curriculum Support (CS)<sup>9</sup> advisers on improving performance in secondary schools. They have carried out a detailed review of the core subjects in each secondary school and are now focusing on non-core subject departments. However, these advisers do not have a forward work programme and headteachers are not clear about their entitlement to other support in order to address their schools' own priorities. There is variation in the quality of support and advice provided. Also, there is limited support available through the medium of Welsh.
- 102 The authority now has appropriate arrangements in place in relation to the Better Schools Fund (BSF).
- 103 The Athrawon Bro team is well managed and works effectively with other officers and advisers, as well as with external agencies such as Menter Iaith. The team targets its work effectively using an appropriate range of qualitative and statistical information to ensure that the service is used well. The service also provides very good literacy support for Welsh first language. The service evaluates effectively the impact of the support it provides to individual schools.

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<sup>9</sup> Curriculum Support (CS) is a shared service between Flintshire, Conwy and Denbighshire. The service isn't under the direct management of Denbighshire. Denbighshire funds around a third of this service and is entitled to have annual access to an equivalent amount of CS time.

- 104 There are good initiatives to support schools in areas such as Healthy Schools, sports development and the PE and School Sport project, music and creative arts. These are supported well by the Community Focused Schools initiative.
- 105 There are instances of developing links and partnership working between different elements of curriculum support. However, much more remains to be done in establishing formal procedures for the sharing of information and in systematically evaluating the impact of support in terms of improved outcomes for learners.

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

- 106 The school improvement service has identified the need to improve the quality and capacity of senior and middle leadership and management in schools. The service has a clear targeted programme to do this. Although at an early stage of development it is now implementing effective cross-phase leadership programmes for schools. It has also provided schools with useful support for self-evaluation and development planning by middle and senior managers. This enables schools to be less dependent on LA support to identify areas that need improvement.
- 107 The authority provides good support for school governors. The chairs of governors forum, which first met in January 2008, has helped to raise morale among governors and develop a shared vision for school improvement. Recent governor training sessions have included raising governors' awareness of the new partnership agreement and improving governors' understanding of how to use data to evaluate school performance.

<b>Promoting social inclusion and wellbeing</b> <b>Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings</b>
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- 108 There are good and some very good features in the authority's work in promoting social inclusion and wellbeing.
- 109 The authority's corporate parenting panel is working well. Officers and members work effectively together to support looked after children at school.
- 110 The authority co-ordinates support for looked after children well. All looked-after pupils have good quality personal education plans in place. Children in Years 9, 10 and 11 have additional tuition; the authority works with Barnardos to provide children with personal advisor support in their GCSE years. As a result, looked-after children achieve good outcomes at key stage 4. The percentage of looked-after children gaining two GCSEs A-G or GNVQ has increased between 2005 and 2008 from 0% to 81.8%. Support for looked-after children in other key stages is not as comprehensive. Attendance for looked-after children in both primary and secondary schools has also improved.
- 111 The Lifelong Learning directorate and Children's Services department work well together to provide good leadership and direction about safeguarding to schools and other education personnel. The Lifelong Learning Safeguarding Officer delivers child protection training to school staff and monitors their participation well. This enables him to make sure that all schools take part in training. However, there is too much inconsistency in headteachers' understanding of the complexity of child

protection and safeguarding work and their responsibilities within this. Consequently, they do not track the progress of child protection referrals well enough.

- 112 The authority works well in partnership with Conwy County Borough Council to deliver services for Gypsy Traveller Children. The authority has set up a centre for Gypsy Traveller young people in Rhyl. Young people attend well and make good progress. However, the authority does not track the progress made by Gypsy Traveller children in primary schools well enough.
- 113 The authority continues to provide a very good service for pupils with English as an additional language (EAL). This enables these pupils to achieve very good standards in end of key stage assessments and at GCSE. The EAL service makes effective use of assessment to identify pupils' levels of understanding. It puts effective individual learning plans in place to help schools support these pupils to make good progress.
- 114 The authority provides good support to a significant number of pupils who are educated outside of schools or who receive extra support within schools. However, it does not pull together information about outcomes well enough to monitor the overall effectiveness of its support. The authority does not use databases to identify trends or to analyse the effectiveness of individual services.

### **Support for attendance**

- 115 The Education Social Work (ESW) service is well led and managed. The authority is now very effective in improving attendance at schools. It has significantly increased attendance at both secondary and primary schools between 2005 and 2008<sup>10</sup>. It makes very good use of attendance data to identify trends in attendance at school and pupil level. Senior staff make very good use of this information to target support at individual pupil and whole school levels where it is most needed.
- 116 The improvement in attendance is the result of an increased strategic priority. Effective termly meetings with headteachers take place to discuss issues affecting pupil attendance. Plans and targets agreed to resolve them are now in place and outcomes of these meetings are carefully recorded and shared. They have been instrumental in supporting schools to improve their attendance.
- 117 The ESW service is making good progress towards implementing an authority-wide policy to discourage parents from taking children on holiday in term time. Similarly, the authority has worked well with the Local Health Board and doctors' surgeries to implement a medical absence scheme to authorise doctor's appointments.

### **Support for behaviour**

- 118 Services to help schools promote good behaviour are effective and well managed.
- 119 With help from the service, secondary schools have established multi-agency groups to consider issues affecting individual young people and to implement action plans to help resolve them. These early interventions help prevent pupils from progressing to more serious behaviour problems.

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<sup>10</sup> See Appendix 1

- 120 The managed transfer policy to reduce permanent exclusions is very effective. Staff from the behaviour and inclusion service make sure that pupils on a managed transfer or returning to mainstream from the Pupil Referral Unit have a good personal support plan and that a re-integration programme is in place to support the pupil. This policy effectively helps pupils at risk of exclusion make a fresh start in another school.
- 121 The authority has worked very well with schools to reduce permanent exclusions and the length of fixed-term exclusions<sup>11</sup>. The senior education officer for behaviour and inclusion holds a formal termly meeting with each secondary school head and senior leadership teams to examine exclusion data and discuss strategies to improve behaviour and reduce exclusions. On-site inclusion centres and isolation rooms help build school capacity to manage challenging behaviour. However, schools still make too much use of very short fixed-term exclusion<sup>12</sup>.
- 122 The Pupil Referral Units (PRU) at each key stage work well to plan appropriate provision with partners. Partners include the Youth Offending Team, further education colleges and Rhyl Young People's project. The PRU has a good focus on the re-integration of pupils into mainstream provision. Pupils taking part in these programmes attain a range of academic or vocational qualifications and the majority progress to further education, employment or training.

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

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

- 123 There are many consistently good and some very good features in the authority's support and provision for learners with special educational needs (SEN) and for those with English as an additional language (EAL).
- 124 The planning and delivery of support and provision for learners with ALN is underpinned by a strategic approach that is consistent with the authority's promotion of inclusion and raising standards for all learners. Business and operational plans for ALN services are clearly linked with the authority's higher level plans and include clear targets expectations for learners' achievement.
- 125 The authority meets the statutory requirements of the SEN and Disability Act (2001) efficiently and effectively. Written records of statutory assessments, statements and annual reviews are of consistently good quality and completed promptly. Officers give suitably priority to attending reviews of these pupils with the highest levels of need, especially those placed out-of-county.
- 126 Through the work of the Educational Psychology Service, the Learning Development Team, the Sensory Support Service, the Behaviour Support Service and the service for English as an additional language, the authority provides high-quality professional advice and support for children and young people with the full range of ALN. Schools and parents have a high degree of trust and confidence in these services.

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<sup>11</sup> See Appendix 1

<sup>12</sup> See Appendix 1

- 127 There are clear and appropriate arrangements for identifying and assessing the needs of pre-school children and for providing early support in partnership with local child health and social services. As a result, there is very effective early intervention for young children with SEN and disabilities, especially those with speech, language, communication, hearing and visual needs.
- 128 The authority provides effective support for pupils with severe and complex needs and disabilities in its special schools and in special classes in mainstream schools. The authority and its two special schools have made effective use of the 'Unlocking the Potential' funding to increase the capacity of mainstream schools to meet the needs of pupils with autism, severe learning difficulties and challenging behaviour.
- 129 The authority provides very good support for learners with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The increased capacity in the Educational Psychology and Behaviour Support Services has led appropriately to more support and training for schools and parents and to the provision of a fully bilingual counselling service for children and young people. When necessary, the authority makes appropriate specialised provision for the very few children and young people whose social, emotional and behavioural needs cannot be met in a mainstream school.
- 130 The authority has taken effective action to increase the capacity of mainstream schools to identify and meet pupils' needs at an early stage, and so to reduce the number of pupils whose unmet learning needs contribute to behavioural and emotional difficulties. The increased capacity in the Learning Development Team and the Educational Psychology Service means the authority provides schools with increased access to good quality training and focused support for the early identification of literacy, speech, language and communication needs.
- 131 The authority's services for children and young people with speech, language and communication difficulties including those with autistic spectrum disorder continue to have outstanding features.
- 132 The joint arrangements between the authority and the Conwy and Denbighshire Speech and Language Therapy Service are continuing to have a very positive impact on the quality and accessibility of provision for children with speech, language and communication difficulties.
- 133 The Sensory Service provides good support for pupils with hearing, vision and multi-sensory impairment. The service makes very good provision for Welsh-speaking pupils, for example by providing tuition in the Welsh version of Braille.
- 134 There is good support for parents and carers. Parents very rarely take appeals to the SEN Tribunal for Wales and do not often seek the support of the authority's parent partnership service provider, SNAP<sup>13</sup> Cymru. Once parents have made contact with ALN services, they receive good quality information and timely support from officers. However, the lack of a directory of services means that parents, carers and voluntary sector representatives do not always know who to contact with an initial enquiry about ALN services, and this can slow down their access to advice and support.

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<sup>13</sup> SNAP Cymru is a charity that offers information and support to families of children and young people who have special educational needs.

- 135 The ALN services make a strong contribution to the authority's overall work to promote school improvement in mainstream schools. These services have clear roles and responsibilities in the overall improvement plans for schools in categories<sup>14</sup> 3 and 4.
- 136 The authority is taking appropriate action to support one of its special schools, where senior management posts are currently filled on an interim basis. Officers in the Partnerships and Inclusion division have worked closely with the school in recent months to improve safeguarding arrangements and to address the requirements made by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (CSSIW) for the improvement of residential provision.
- 137 There are good arrangements for ensuring that, where pupils are placed in specialised out-of-county schools, the provision is of good quality and providing value for money. However, the authority does not have appropriate arrangements for monitoring the quality of education provided by hospital teachers for pupils with physical or mental health difficulties. Expenditure on ALN services is consistent with the authority's total expenditure on education.

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

- 138 The authority has appropriately recalculated school capacity using the new Welsh Assembly Government formula. The school organisation data submitted to the Welsh Assembly Government in January 2008 shows surplus capacity at 12.5% in primary schools. This is the third lowest in Wales. The number of primary schools with over 25% surplus has fallen since January 2007 from 15 to 10. Total primary capacity has fallen by 524 places from 8,754 to 8,230, with surplus places falling from 1521 to 1,029. More recent data suggests that surplus places have fallen further.
- 139 In January 2008 there were 7,682 pupils in secondary schools within Denbighshire against a capacity of 8,313, creating an overall surplus of 711 (8.6%) places. This is the fourth lowest level of unfilled total capacity in Wales.
- 140 While there appears to be limited surplus places, there remain problems. These are ensuring sufficient Welsh-medium provision in the coastal urban area; reducing surplus capacity in small rural schools; managing schools that are close to or overcapacity; and remodelling small sixth forms that have limited financial viability and are constrained in terms of the curriculum they can offer.
- 141 There is, now, more communication and consultation between authority departments and all stakeholders. This is evidenced in the development of the Modernising Education Policy Framework (MEPF). However, planning Special Education provision is managed separately from mainstream school provision, outside the MEPF. Also, comparison of primary pupil number projections and actual numbers has only recently been undertaken and the analysis has yet to be shared with schools. This has hindered primary schools' ability to plan ahead.

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<sup>14</sup> The Partnership Agreement places schools in categories from 1-5. Category 5 schools are the schools that require most support while category 1 are in need of less support from the authority.

- 142 Four area reviews are taking place, as proposed in the Modernising Education Policy Framework. The first of these has resulted in the agreement to close the sixth forms at Rhyl High School and Blessed Edward Jones High School, to be replaced by the delivery of post-16 education and training by Coleg Llandrillo Rhyl.

### **Asset management and the capital programme**

- 143 The authority has extensive, accurate and up-to-date information about its schools' condition, sufficiency and suitability.
- 144 Despite a high level of capital spending over the last four years, many school buildings remain in poor condition. Rigorous project management has now improved the decision making with regard to the prioritisation of capital projects.
- 145 Youth service accommodation has not been a priority and any refurbishment has been mainly to address health and safety needs. Developing community-focused assets has not been a priority. However, there is a track record of completing building projects on time and to budget.

### **Admissions**

- 146 The admissions process has improved significantly. The authority is now managing common admissions procedures for all schools. The authority is now able to identify potential problems such as oversubscription in individual schools and address them at an early stage. The task of mapping schools' catchment areas is incomplete.
- 147 Schools are appropriately beginning to experience a level of challenge on admissions that was not previously possible because the authority did not have the information on the numbers or location of pupils likely to attend each school.
- 148 Admissions and transport needs for looked-after children have a high priority. They are addressed speedily and flexibly.

### **Transport**

- 149 The home-to-school transport service is generally effective. An officer effectively monitors the performance of home-to-school transport and Criminal Record Bureau checks on drivers and escorts. Reports on performance are scrutinised by senior officers and the Lifelong Learning scrutiny committee.
- 150 There is no policy to govern the assessment of applications for home to school transport that are not routine. This means there is a risk of inconsistency in the response to such applications.
- 151 The authority is reviewing its transport behaviour code. As well as driver training, the process has engaged effectively with young people through online consultation, Theatre in Education, and targeted workshops with young people.
- 152 The development of a flexible, demand-led transport service is improving access to out-of-school-hours activity, youth services and adult education.

## Early years

- 153 The authority and partners from the voluntary sector are working well to improve planning for the delivery of early years places in maintained and non-maintained settings. This is supported by secure data and a clear rationale for the registration of settings. The early entitlement working group is developing a policy for audit and review of early years' provision to inform this process.
- 154 There is effective co-ordination of support and challenge for the maintained and non-maintained settings. Multi-agency partnership contributes positively to the timely identification and response to ALN in the early years.

## Support services

### Grade 4: Shortcomings in important areas

- 155 There are shortcomings in important areas in the way in which the authority secures effective support services for its schools. Overall, the authority has provided too little support to schools to help them make wise choices when buying support services.
- 156 Until very recently, schools have not exercised their right to buy services elsewhere despite their reported dissatisfaction with some aspects of the services they have received from the authority. The services that the authority provides to schools have also been slow to develop an approach that treats schools as customers. These are important shortcomings.
- 157 Officers within the Lifelong Learning Directorate have brought schools and service providers together to identify problems and to redesign service level agreements (SLA). New SLAs are in place from April 2009 covering a number of different service areas. However, some of the new SLAs do not yet distinguish appropriately between work that the authority must carry out on behalf of all schools, including its monitoring role, and work that schools might legitimately carry out themselves or procure from another source. As a result, any schools opting out of certain authority services will nevertheless enjoy the unfair benefit of some elements that are paid for by those schools choosing to remain with the authority.
- 158 Most of the new SLAs are not specific in terms of the volume of service to which schools buying in will be entitled. This approach leads to demand-led services and contributes to schools' perceptions of shortages of capacity. In these cases, service managers cannot plan their staffing levels on the basis of a known level of demand nor generate more income to pay for additional capacity should demand exceed the anticipated levels.
- 159 There remain some key areas of service provision for which new SLAs have not yet been agreed. Work is continuing to resolve schools' concerns about aspects of property services before SLAs can be drafted. The lack of clarity with regard to schools' entitlements in relation to school-funded curriculum support remains an important area in need of attention.

## **Finance**

- 160 Finance officers generally provide helpful support to schools in managing their budgets. Improving funding levels have contributed to an increase to a more prudent level in school balances during 2007-2008, with comparatively few schools carrying over excessive balances. A small minority of schools have carried forward deficits year-on-year for too long. However, the authority has now agreed clear guidance and actions with schools about the future approach in dealing with surpluses and deficits.
- 161 Though it supports schools well, the service has not been active enough in improving the quality of financial management and reducing schools' reliance on the authority. The introduction of a bursar network is a positive step in this respect, but the information and tools available to schools to help them plan ahead is limited.

## **Human resources (HR)**

- 162 HR staff provide a satisfactory range of corporate functions to schools. They provide a comprehensive range of model policies and HR staff manage relationships with teaching and non-teaching trades unions positively. However, the authority does not have enough awareness of the quality of HR management in schools and whether or not schools have adopted and are implementing appropriate policies. The authority provides well-informed support to schools with individual casework, but there is limited capacity that can lead to delay.
- 163 The authority acknowledges that the flow of information from schools is less reliable than it should be, so that information about sickness absence, for example, is not always up-to-date.

## **Information and communications technology (ICT)**

- 164 All schools have access to the authority's broadband networks, which are generally reliable. The authority's website provides a very good range of easily accessible information to the public about schools and about policies, procedures and developments of interest to parents and to partners. However, information flow between the authority and its schools is mainly by email. The intranet does not offer secure sections for each school to access performance analyses and notes of visits by school improvement officers.
- 165 Despite growing dissatisfaction with the service, schools have, until recently, purchased technical support for ICT equipment from the authority. This service has not grown in capacity to meet the increasing demand with the result that the service has failed to meet schools' needs. The authority has only belatedly taken action to remedy this situation.

## **Property services**

- 166 Many schools are dissatisfied with the authority's property services. Their concerns relate, for the most part, to the fact that they receive too little information about the timing of work to be carried out, and, for school-funded work, the cost to the school's budget of arranging and carrying out the work. The present arrangements arose as a consequence of the authority being served an Improvement Notice by the Health

and Safety Executive in 2005. This led to the authority issuing to all schools clear guidance detailing the requirements for all Building Maintenance to be procured via the local authority to ensure that all work is undertaken by approved contractors. There has been good work to bring schools and property services together to better understand these difficulties. This has led to greater freedom for schools to employ contractors directly for 'low risk' projects from an approved list. However, the authority insists that medium and higher risk work is procured through property services so that the authority can satisfy itself that it is fulfilling its duties to ensure the health and safety of contractors. This approach hinders the development of schools as asset managers and effective procurers of services.

- 167 Schools have access to a wide range of good technical expertise relating to their buildings from within the authority. Work remains to be done to develop a SLA that sets out clearly the respective responsibilities of schools and property services. Despite their concerns, schools have chosen to 'pool' much of their delegated repairs and maintenance funding. This is helpful in enabling the authority to combine funding streams effectively and to prioritise work.

### **Catering**

- 168 The authority has had considerable success in simplifying for parents the process by which it identifies pupils who are entitled to free school meals. As a result, the number of such pupils has increased, in contrast to the trend across Wales. The school meals service take-up of free school meals is now over 80%. The gradual introduction of 'cashless' payment systems in some schools has contributed to this improvement. There has also been a slight increase in the take-up of paid meals in primary schools, but this has not been enough to diminish concerns within the authority about the service's financial viability. The subsidy to the service will increase to £250,000 in 2009-2010.

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

**Strategic management**

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

- 169 There are some good prospects for improvement in strategic management, but there are also barriers in important areas. There are examples of good and very good progress and pace in service improvement, in some instances from a very low base, since the last inspection. The authority has made difficult decisions to ensure that there is now a strong foundation to secure further improvements. Improved accountability will enable more effective decision-making.
- 170 Relationships with schools have improved significantly and are no longer a barrier to improving services and performance. There is regular communication with schools and good consultation to develop new policies. Regular cluster meetings are used effectively to share information, discuss ideas and help find local solutions to help identify the best use of resources. However, the local authority does not use this relationship with schools to help them to be more independent in driving improvement.
- 171 The authority has adopted an appropriate strategic approach to improving the quality of education services and addressing the performance of learners, which is below expectation, especially at key stage 4. However, the lack of an agreed published strategy to ensure effective and efficient joint working between school improvement, ALN, Inclusion, Children's Services, other directorates, schools and external partners is a barrier to identifying and delivering mid-term and long-term priorities to tackle underperformance.
- 172 There are good systems in place for planning and performance management. However, the strategic planning system is not yet fully embedded at service level. Business plans are at an early stage of development. The links between service plans are not strong enough. In addition, in a few service areas, systematic monitoring, evaluating and planning for improvement are underdeveloped. This means that the authority is not yet able to fully evaluate the impact of its services nor can it use the information to inform future planning enough.
- 173 The authority has effectively managed the transition period between the interim corporate director and the new corporate director for lifelong learning. However, the authority has several key posts for which succession planning must be managed, both within the authority and within schools. If this is not managed well it carries high risk and can potentially damage the authority's reputation.
- 174 The authority has begun to implement plans to address the recommendations in the Wales Audit Office Corporate Governance report but as yet they are at an early stage of development.

**Support for school improvement**

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

- 175 There are some good prospects for improvement in support for school improvement services, but there are also barriers in important areas.
- 176 In a relatively short period of time the school improvement service has made good progress in putting systems in place to address issues identified in the last inspection and officers are focusing strategically on the main areas of underperformance. However, these systems have not yet had a significant impact on the trend of underperformance, especially at key stage 4.
- 177 Elected members and officers now play a key role in holding schools and the education service to account. The School Standards Monitoring Group (SSMG) supports the improvement of standards by giving headteachers and chairs of governors the opportunity to discuss the performance of their school with members and senior officers in a non-public forum. The SSMG has enabled elected members to gain a clearer understanding of the issues impacting on the performance of individual schools. It also challenges and identifies support to schools to improve performance and identifies areas of good or outstanding practice that can be replicated.
- 178 A range of useful groups has been set up to improve joint working and to ensure officers across different services are well-informed about schools and have up to date information to support and challenge effectively. However, not all officers give enough priority to these meetings. As a result, joint working is not yet effective. Also, the authority has not identified the need for a formal process to ensure that individual officers bring an effective and consistent challenge to schools or do enough to build the capacity of schools to improve themselves.
- 179 The 14-19 network is developing an increasing range of vocational courses at key stage 4. This offers good prospects for improving attainment.
- 180 The setting up of the Welsh working group demonstrates the authority's clear commitment to addressing issues relating to Welsh as a subject and access for pupils to Welsh-medium provision and support for schools.
- 181 An important barrier to improvement is the lack of a formal strategy to inform longer term planning and set a clear direction for the service. Also, systematic monitoring and evaluating are underdeveloped. At present, the service does not systematically evaluate the impact of its services enough.
- 182 The authority's ability to deliver curricular support through the medium of Welsh is variable. It has taken initial action to improve the availability of Welsh-medium support, for example by bringing in subject support from neighbouring authorities to provide training. However, in general, it has not made enough progress since the last inspection. For instance, support for numeracy in primary schools is not available in Welsh, and the general lack of capacity of Curriculum Support advisers to deliver in Welsh continues to be a major barrier.

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

- 183 There are good prospects for improvement in promoting social inclusion and wellbeing, with no major barriers. The strategic and operational management for promoting social inclusion and wellbeing is effective. The service has improved significantly since the last inspection in 2007. Senior staff responsible for these services lead well and implement good strategic approaches to securing improvements. They also work well with schools and other partners to drive changes in service delivery.
- 184 The Lifelong Learning directorate is developing a quality assurance process to monitor the impact and effectiveness of the directorate's safeguarding procedures. It has established a database to help monitor the progress of child protection referrals from schools and analyse issues arising from them. The quality assurance framework sets out a range of activities and identifies who is responsible for undertaking them. This framework will help headteachers gain a better understanding of their roles and responsibilities and identify issues for further training and guidance.
- 185 The authority intends to extend to more schools the development of multi-agency groups that provide targeted support to pupils. These new groups will encompass both secondary and primary schools. The authority is to pilot a new group in Rhyl. This development will help start improving the sharing of information about individual pupils across phases to make sure that good support is available.
- 186 The behaviour and inclusion service has an effective process in place for monitoring and tracking the support that it offers to vulnerable pupils. The behaviour support moderation panel brings together a range of staff who agree provision that meets the needs and monitors effectively the progress made by pupils.
- 187 Systematic monitoring and planning for improvement are good. This means that the service is able to evaluate the impact of its work and use the information to inform future planning.

**Additional learning needs (ALN)**  
**Grade 2: Improvement prospects are good, with no major barriers**

- 188 There are good prospects for improvement in additional learning needs, with no major barriers. The strategic and operational management of the authority's service for children and young people with additional learning needs is efficient and effective. Leadership and management of the service, and of individual teams, are good. Officers work closely together and with other partners to help learners achieve well.
- 189 There are well-embedded systems for ensuring that the work of services, teams and individual officers is of good quality and helps learners to achieve good outcomes. ALN service teams use information on the attainment, achievement and destinations of learners to improve service delivery and to ensure that resources are effectively targeted. However, the authority misses opportunities to use data on outcomes for learners with ALN to support school improvement more widely.

- 190 The authority has made good progress in addressing shortcomings identified at the last inspection. There has been a significant increase in support and provision for learners with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, and in the capacity of mainstream schools to identify and meet pupils' additional learning needs at an early stage.
- 191 There is still uncertainty about the timescales for securing permanent leadership arrangements in the authority's residential special school. Until this uncertainty is resolved, there will continue to be additional management and financial burdens on the authority. These have the potential to hinder the rate of improvement in SEN provision in the immediate future. However, the authority is taking appropriate action to manage these risks.

### **Access and school organisation**

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

- 192 There are some good prospects for improvement in access and school reorganisation, but there are also barriers in important areas.
- 193 The consultation and communication with stakeholders to develop the Modernising Education Policy Framework (MEPF) was very good. There is now a clear structure and more formal communication and consultation between authority departments and all stakeholders. Members, officers and headteachers understand that the authority has to make changes. However, the authority had to withdraw plans in 2005 to reorganise primary schools and is not yet able to show a track record of making improvements in this area.
- 194 Asset management, admissions, transport and early years are managed effectively. They have benefited from the improved co-ordination of the joint working of the various authority departments and other agencies. As a result, they are working more efficiently.
- 195 There is a major suitability and maintenance backlog in schools. No clear capital investment strategy for schools has yet been agreed and this is a barrier to improvement.

### **Support services**

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

- 196 There are some good prospects for improvement in support services, but there are also barriers in important areas.
- 197 The authority has recognised shortcomings in its approach to delivering support services and has begun to act on these. Officers within the Lifelong Learning Directorate have worked effectively to bring schools and service providers together to analyse problems and to re-design SLAs. Weaknesses remain but there are now appropriate arrangements for annual review.
- 198 The authority has been slow to identify services such as ICT technical support that have been failing schools because of inadequate capacity. However, it has now acted decisively to put better interim arrangements in place while it seeks to find a private sector provider. This shows early promise of a willingness to consider alternative solutions.

199 Despite these early signs of progress, overall arrangements remain untested in terms of their ability to secure high quality, cost-effective support services for schools while, at the same time, ensuring the authority's ability to fulfil its core functions, including an appropriate level of monitoring in schools.

## Re-inspection of youth support services

### Key Question 3: How well do learning experiences meet the needs and interests of young people and the wider community?

#### Grade 4: Some good features but shortcomings in important areas

- 200 Overall, the Children and Young People's (CYP) partnership has made slow progress in improving the range and quality of youth support services in Denbighshire. This is because they have focused on strengthening partnership arrangements for planning and performance management.
- 201 The range of opportunities for young people to provide feedback on services and to influence provision is good. The partnership leads this work well through its participation strategy, training and support. Leaders and managers consult widely with young people to develop the CYP Plan. The local authority youth service's youth forums help young people to become more aware of community issues and to contribute to local, regional and national developments.
- 202 The partnership does not have an overview of how many young people access youth support services or the outcomes they gain through this informal learning. Where this data is available, the numbers of young people accessing services are too low in comparison to other local authorities. However, young people who attend youth support services continue to access a good range of accredited opportunities. The local authority works well with Flintshire and Conwy to jointly fund a Children and Youth University development officer to develop the range of accreditation.
- 203 There are too few opportunities for young people to access services through the medium of Welsh, or make use of their Welsh language skills within youth support services. However, this has been given high priority by the partnership. Cymorth funding is used appropriately to improve the range of opportunities.
- 204 The partnership does not co-ordinate or plan strategically for basic skills support or information services for young people. A few developments have improved access to information, advice and guidance including the Youth Den website. Coleg Llandrillo shares its basic skills assessment tool with schools and delivers training for a range of partners. However, the local authority youth service basic skills action plan has not progressed.
- 205 The partnership does not have enough of an overview to know whether learning experiences meet the needs of the community and young people. As a result, it does not analyse provision well enough to identify gaps, duplication and opportunities for joint working. However, the newly developed locality networks are starting to improve understanding of need and joint working at a local level.

**Key Question 5: How effective are leadership and strategic management?**

**Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings**

- 206 Overall, elected members and senior officers provide good leadership to clarify vision and improve planning for youth support services. Elected members have a better understanding of the youth service and wider youth support services than at the time of the last inspection. However, scrutiny of the work of the partnership is only at an early stage of development.
- 207 Most partners have a clearer understanding than before of the role of the strategic partnership. In addition, the Extending Entitlement group has a more clearly-defined role and is now starting to plan for wider improvements. However, a few individual partners do not understand their roles and responsibilities or contribute fully yet. The partnership engages well with a wide range of voluntary sector partners. Many partners are involved in good multi-agency working at a local level, often led by the voluntary sector.
- 208 The partnership has improved its planning systems through the partnership support team. The partnership is using the CYP Plan as a good driver for change. Almost all partners understand its clear priorities. Managers have made good improvements to allocate Cymorth funding in a transparent way that is linked to priorities. However, the partnership sub-groups and individual partners have not yet embedded CYP plan priorities in their own plans. Targets do not always have a strong enough focus on outcomes for young people.
- 209 There are clear, agreed processes for performance management of the CYP Plan. However, the strategic partnership does not yet have a clear enough overview of provision and resources. As a result, the partnership and partner organisations do not analyse and use data and information on the services and outcomes well enough to inform strategic planning and to co-ordinate multi-agency working.
- 210 At an operational level, the partnership support team gives clear direction and guidance to help partners plan improvements to their services. The team works well to improve communication with partners and is starting to link more closely with other strategic partnerships.

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

The officers, elected members and partners of Denbighshire County Council's Education Service wish to thank the Estyn inspection team for the thorough, balanced and professional manner in which they conducted the inspection. This was an integrated inspection of the entire LEA provision and youth support services and while it was appropriately challenging and rigorous it was also a positive learning experience for those concerned.

Following the previous inspection in July 2007, officers and elected members acknowledged the amount of work required to raise performance to the expected standard and although there is still a considerable way to go we are confident the processes and procedures in place form the foundations for future improvements.

All services were subject to robust and forensic scrutiny and appraisal with judgements made against our current performance and prospects for future improvement. We are pleased that the outcomes of this process largely match our self-evaluation with the exception of Support Services. Furthermore, the report confirms that, through the leadership of our senior officers and elected members, we are working in a progressively more effective way with our schools and partners.

The authority has already begun to address many of the recommendations made in the report. We are confident that we will quickly deliver improvements that will allow us to provide better services for our children, young people and their families. In its role as a local education authority, Denbighshire County Council looks forward to developing and implementing an action plan together with our schools and partners which addresses the issues raised in this report and is committed to build upon the solid foundations evident in Estyn's conclusions.

## Appendix 1

### Local authority performance data

#### Performance of schools in National Curriculum assessments and public examinations

The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals in Denbighshire over the last three years is:

	2006	2007	2008
<b>Denbighshire</b>	13.3%	13.8%	14.7%
<b>Wales</b>	17.5%	17.4%	17.0%
<b>Rank</b>	6	7	10

The following tables compare the percentage of pupils in Denbighshire achieving the core subject indicator<sup>15</sup> (CSI) in National Curriculum teacher assessments in key stages 1, 2 and 3 in the last three years with that of pupils throughout Wales<sup>16</sup>.

Key stage 1	2006	2007	2008
<b>Denbighshire</b>	79.5%	80.7%	80.4%
<b>Wales</b>	80.6%	80.1%	80.7%
<b>Rank<sup>17</sup></b>	14	11	15

Key stage 2	2006	2007	2008
<b>Denbighshire</b>	71.3%	73.2%	76.5%
<b>Wales</b>	74.2%	74.1%	75.5%
<b>Rank</b>	17	13	12

Key stage 3	2006	2007	2008
<b>Denbighshire</b>	58.7%	57.4%	59.4%
<b>Wales</b>	58.2%	56.7%	59.6%
<b>Rank</b>	10	12	14

In key stages 1 and 2 the performance of Denbighshire schools in national curriculum assessments has improved at a slightly faster rate than Wales as a whole since 2006. In key stage 1 the percentage of pupils achieving the CSI is nearer to the Wales average and in key stage 2 it is above the average for Wales. However, in key stage 3 it is now below the average for Wales. In key stages 1 and 3 performance relative to other authorities has declined in the last three years.

<sup>15</sup> The Core Subject Indicator represents the percentage of pupils achieving the expected level or above in English or Welsh (first language), mathematics and science in combination. The expected level of the majority of pupils at the end of key stage 1 is level 2, level 4 at key stage 2 and level 5 at key stage 3.

<sup>16</sup> Sources: National Statistics: SDR 130/2006, National Curriculum Assessments of 7,11 and 14 year olds: Wales, 2006; SDR 145/2007, National Curriculum Assessments of 7,11 and 14 year olds: Wales, 2007; SDR 129/2008, National Curriculum Assessments of 7,11 and 14 year olds: Wales, 2008

<sup>17</sup> When performance is compared to all the 22 authorities across Wales

Performance in 2008 in non-core subjects at key stage 3 is above the Welsh average for all subjects except information technology.

The following tables compare the performance of pupils in Denbighshire schools Wales with that of pupils throughout Wales in external examinations at key stage 4<sup>18</sup>.

<b>Percentage of pupils who gained 5 or more GCSEs grade A*-C or vocational equivalent</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
<b>Denbighshire</b>	48.5%	47.2%	50.9%
<b>Wales</b>	53.8%	54.2%	55.8%
<b>Rank</b>	18	20	17

<b>Percentage of pupils who achieved the level 1 threshold<sup>19</sup></b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
<b>Denbighshire</b>	84.1%	82.3%	84.3%
<b>Wales</b>	86.0%	85.7%	86.8%
<b>Rank</b>	17	20	19

<b>Percentage of pupils who achieved the level 2 threshold</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
<b>Denbighshire</b>		47.7%	51.5%
<b>Wales</b>		55%	58.0%
<b>Rank</b>		20	20

<b>Percentage of pupils who achieved the level 2 threshold including a GCSE pass in English or Welsh first language and mathematics</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
<b>Denbighshire</b>		37.0%	40.4%
<b>Wales</b>		44.0%	45.6%
<b>Rank</b>		20	19

<b>Average wider points score</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
<b>Denbighshire</b>	312.7	311.9	326.4
<b>Wales</b>	335.4	343.9	356.0
<b>Rank</b>	18	20	20

<b>Percentage of pupils who attained the CSI at KS4</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
<b>Denbighshire</b>	34.3%	34.4%	40.3%
<b>Wales</b>	39.7%	40.0%	44.4%
<b>Rank</b>	16	17	16

<sup>18</sup> Sources: SDR 164/2006, GCSE/GNVQ and GCE A, AS and AVCE results in Wales, 2006; R 184/2007(R) GCSE/GNVQ and GCE A, AS, AVCE results in Wales, 2007; SDR 195/2008 Examination Results in Wales 2007/08

<sup>19</sup> The new 'threshold' indicators represent a volume of approved external qualifications within the National Qualifications Framework. It consists of a wider range of qualifications than previously used. The 'level 1' threshold is equivalent to 5 GCSEs at grades D-G. The 'level 2' threshold is equivalent to 5 GCSEs at grades A\*-C.

<b>Percentage of pupils aged 15 leaving full time education without a recognised qualification</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
<b>Denbighshire</b>	2.6%	1.6%	1.8%
<b>Wales</b>	2.1%	1.7%	1.5%
<b>Rank</b>	17	14	16

Performance of Denbighshire schools at key stage 4 has improved at a faster rate than the Wales average over recent years on most indicators. The exceptions are the percentage gaining the level 1 threshold and the average wider points score. However, Denbighshire remains one of the lowest performing authorities in Wales on nearly all indicators.

The percentage of Denbighshire pupils gaining the core subject indicator in key stage 4 has improved by nearly six percentage points in the last three years. However, it has not improved relative to other authorities in this time.

The percentage of Denbighshire pupils leaving full time education without a recognised qualification improved in 2007 and was slightly better than the Wales average but in 2008 this improvement was not fully maintained.

The tables below show the distribution of Denbighshire schools within the all-Wales Free School Meals Benchmark Quartiles<sup>20</sup> for the Core Subject Indicator<sup>21</sup> at each key stage.

### Key stage 1

<b>Percentage of schools in</b>	<b>First quarter</b>	<b>Second quarter</b>	<b>Third quarter</b>	<b>Fourth quarter</b>
2006	24%	20%	24%	33%
2007	34%	9%	32%	26%
2008	26%	30%	30%	15%

### Key stage 2

<b>Percentage of schools in</b>	<b>First quarter</b>	<b>Second quarter</b>	<b>Third quarter</b>	<b>Fourth quarter</b>
2006	19%	21%	31%	29%
2007	27%	15%	33%	25%
2008	19%	29%	25%	27%

<sup>20</sup> Each year school examination and test results are grouped together according to free school meal entitlement. Each group of schools is then divided into four quarters. This allows comparison between similar schools across Wales.

<sup>21</sup> The Core Subject Indicator represents the percentage of pupils achieving the expected level or above in English or Welsh (first language), mathematics and science in combination.

### Key stage 3

Percentage of schools in	First quarter	Second quarter	Third quarter	Fourth quarter
2006	25%	12.5%	37.5%	25%
2007	12.5%	37.5%	12.5%	37.5%
2008	12.5%	37.5%	12.5%	37.5%

### Key stage 4

Percentage of schools in	First quarter	Second quarter	Third quarter	Fourth quarter
2006	12.5%	12.5%	0%	75%
2007	25%	12.5%	12.5%	50%
2008	37.5%	12.5%	0%	50%

In 2008 the performance of Denbighshire schools is slightly above average for similar schools at key stages 1 and about average at key stage 2. In key stage 3 too many schools are in the lowest quarter and too few in the highest quarter. On four of the indicators at key stage 4 half of all secondary schools are in the bottom quarter. For the percentage of pupils achieving the level 1 threshold only one school was in the top half and there was no school in the top quarter.

The Welsh Assembly Government sets benchmarks for pupil performance based on entitlement to free school meals for three headline indicators; the key stage 3 core subject indicator, GCSE 5A\*-C and wider points score at GCSE. These are the figures for Denbighshire schools in 2006-2008 for the three indicators used:

	2006		2007		2008	
	Denbighshire (actual)	Expected benchmark comparison	Denbighshire (actual)	Expected benchmark comparison	Denbighshire (actual)	Expected benchmark comparison
KS3 CSI	60%	63%	59%	62%	60%	63%
GCSE <sup>1</sup> 5A*-C	50%	59%	48%	59%	53%	62%
GCSE <sup>2</sup> Wider points score					333	374

<sup>1</sup> in 2008 level 2 threshold

<sup>2</sup> in 2008 wider points score

The data in this table differs from data published elsewhere in this report as this data only refers to pupils in mainstream schools and excludes pupils in PRUs, alternative education and special schools.

Denbighshire's performance has been below the expected performance against each of these three indicators in recent years. The difference between the actual and expected values is larger in Denbighshire than in other authorities across Wales.

## Percentage of Year 11 learners continuing in full-time education

	2006		2007		2008	
Denbighshire	76.7%	11th	82.1%	2 <sup>nd</sup>	82.6%	5th
Wales	75.7%		77.2%		79.2%	

The percentage of Year 11 learners continuing in full-time education has improved at a faster rate than Wales since 2006 and is now the fourth best in Wales.

## Percentage of Year 11 learners not in education, employment or training (NEETs)

	2006		2007		2008	
Denbighshire	6.0%	10th	4.9%	5th	6.2%	9th
Wales	6.4%		6.9%		7.1%	

The proportion of learners in Denbighshire not in education, employment or training (NEETs) improved significantly between 2006 and 2007 but fell back in 2008. However, Denbighshire remains better than the Wales average.

## Core subject indicator targets set by Denbighshire at each key stage

The table below shows the core subject indicator target and performance against the target. Also, included is the benchmark Fisher Family Trust (FFT) target for Denbighshire. This is a broad guide for LAs to demonstrate how challenging their targets are.

	2008			2009		2010	
	Performance	Target	FFT	Target	FFT	Target	FFT
<b>KS1 CSI</b>	80.4%	81.7%		82.7%		83.7%	
<b>KS2 CSI</b>	76.5%	74.2%		75.2%		76.2%	
<b>KS3 CSI</b>	59.4%	58.4%	63.8%	59.4%	62.7%	60.4%	
<b>KS4 CSI</b>	40.3%	37.0%	44%	39.0%	45.7%	41.3%	46.4%
<b>GCSE 5 A*-C</b>	50.9%	49.0%	59.8%	51.0%	61.6%	54.1%	62.6%

Denbighshire met or exceeded most of the targets in the action plan for 2008 except for the CSI in key stage 1. However, these targets were not challenging or aspirational enough. Two of the five were set similar to, or lower than, 2006 performance. These targets are also well below the FFT estimates for Denbighshire for each of the years 2008, 2009 and 2010 (only estimates for key stage 3 and key stage 4).

## School inspection findings

The following table shows the inspection grades for schools inspected in Denbighshire between September 2005 and January 2009:

Key to colours and numbers used in the table:

1 Good with outstanding features	2 Good features and no important shortcomings	3 Good features outweigh shortcomings	4 Some good features, but shortcomings in important areas	5 Many important shortcomings
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School	KQ1	KQ2	KQ3	KQ4	KQ5	KQ6	KQ7
Ysgol Tir Morfa	2	2	1	1	2	2	2
Ysgol Bro Cinmeirch	2	2	2	2	3	2	2
Ysgol Reoledig Pantpastynog	2	2	2	2	3	3	2
Ysgol Tremeirchion	2	2	1	2	2	3	2
Llandrillo C.P. School	2	2	2	1	2	3	2
Ysgol Dyffryn Ial	3	3	3	3	4	4	3
Denbigh High School	3	3	3	2	3	3	3
Ysgol Hiraddug	2	2	1	1	1	1	1
Ysgol Gynradd Carrog	2	1	2	1	1	2	1
Gwaenynog Infants School	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Ysgol Dinas Bran	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Ysgol y Faenol	2	2	3	2	2	2	2
Blessed Edward Jones R.C. School	4	3	3	3	4	4	3
Ysgol y Llys	2	2	1	1	1	2	1
Ysgol Uwchradd Glan Clwyd	2	2	2	1	2	2	2
Ysgol Llywelyn	2	2	2	1	2	2	2
Clocaenog C.P. School	2	2	1	1	1	2	2
Bryn Hedydd C.P. School	2	2	2	1	1	1	1
Glyndyfrdwy Community School	3	3	3	2	3	3	3
Ysgol Gymraeg Y Gwernant	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Rhos Street C.P. School	2	2	2	3	2	3	2
Ysgol Esgob Morgan	2	2	2	2	3	3	2
Llantysilio C.I.W. Controlled School	2	2	2	2	2	3	2
Ysgol Cefn Meiriadog	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Bodnant Junior School	3	2	2	2	3	3	2
Ysgol Trefnant	2	2	2	2	3	4	2
Bodnant Infants School	2	2	1	1	2	2	2
Ysgol Caer Drewyn	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Borthyn V.C. Primary School	3	3	2	2	3	3	3
Ysgol y Castell	3	3	2	2	3	3	2
Ysgol Bro Fammau	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Ysgol Penmorfa	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Heulfre Junior School	2	2	2	1	2	2	2
Ysgol Gynradd Pentrecelyn	2	2	2	2	2	3	2
Ysgol Brynhyfryd	2	2	3	2	2	2	2
Rhyl High School	4	4	3	3	4	4	4
St Asaph V.P. Infants	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Ysgol Mair R.C. School	2	2	2	1	2	2	2

Since January 2007, only three of the 20 schools inspected gained grade 1 for any key question. There were significant shortcomings in leadership and management in 50% of these schools and in standards in a quarter.

## Attendance

Primary <sup>22</sup> schools	2005-2006		2006-2007		2007-2008	
	Attendance	Unauthorised absences	Attendance	Unauthorised absences	Attendance	Unauthorised absences
Denbighshire	92.3%	0.7%	93.6%	0.8%	94.1%	0.7%
Wales	92.5%	1.0%	93.1%	0.9%	93.3%	0.9%
Rank	13	12	9	12	4	10

Secondary <sup>23</sup> schools	2005-2006		2006-2007		2007-2008	
	Attendance	Unauthorised absences	Attendance	Unauthorised absences	Attendance	Unauthorised absences
Denbighshire	89.4%	1.6%	89.9%	2.2%	91.2%	2.0%
Wales	90.2%	1.7%	90.7%	1.8	91.0%	1.8%
Rank	17	10	18	15	8	14

Attendance has significantly increased at both secondary and primary schools between 2005 and 2008.

## Behaviour

### Permanent and fixed exclusions from secondary schools<sup>24</sup>

Permanent exclusions (rate per 1,000 pupils)	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008
Denbighshire	2.3	1.3	0.8
Wales	1.9	1.2	1.0

Fixed term five days or fewer (rate per 1,000 pupils)	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008
Denbighshire	70.4	105.0	125.5
Wales	70.7	71.1	70.5
Rank	15	21	22

<sup>22</sup> Sources: National Statistics: DR 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

<sup>23</sup> Sources: National Statistics: SDR 143/2006, Absenteeism from Secondary Schools in Wales, 2005/06; SDR 163/2007 (R), Absenteeism from Secondary Schools in Wales, 2006/07; SDR 170/2008, Absenteeism from Secondary Schools in Wales, 2007/08

<sup>24</sup> Sources: National Statistics: SDR 29/2005, Exclusions from Schools in Wales, 2003/04; SDR 32/2006, Exclusions from Schools in Wales, 2004/05; SDR 32/2007, Exclusions from Schools in Wales, 2005/06

<b>Fixed term of six days or more (rate per 1,000 pupils)</b>	<b>2005-2006</b>	<b>2006-2007</b>	<b>2007-2008</b>
Denbighshire	7.7	8.0	3.5
Wales	9.0	9.0	7.7
Rank	8	10	3

<b>Average number of days lost per fixed-term exclusion of five days or fewer (rate per 1,000 pupils)</b>	<b>2005-2006</b>	<b>2006-2007</b>	<b>2007-2008</b>
Denbighshire	2.6	2.4	1.9
Wales	2.4	2.5	2.3
Rank	14	8	1

<b>Average number of days lost per fixed-term exclusion of six days or more (rate per 1,000 pupils)</b>	<b>2005-2006</b>	<b>2006-2007</b>	<b>2007-2008</b>
Denbighshire	11.6	11.0	10.8
Wales	10.9	11.4	10.9
Rank	19	12	12

<b>Average number of days lost by all fixed-term exclusions (rate per 1,000 pupils)</b>	<b>2005-2006</b>	<b>2006-2007</b>	<b>2007-2008</b>
Denbighshire	3.4	3.5	2.2
Wales	3.5	3.4	3.2
Rank	8	10	1

The authority has worked very well with schools to reduce permanent exclusions and the length of fixed-term exclusions. The number of short fixed-term exclusions is too high.

## Appendix 2

### The grade profile

	2009	
	How good is the local authority's performance?	Will the local authority's performance improve?
Strategic management	3	3
Support for school improvement	3	3
Promoting social inclusion and wellbeing	2	2
Additional learning needs (ALN)	2	2
Access and school organisation	3	3
Support services	4	3

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

### Youth support services

	2009
Key Question 3	4
Key Question 5	3

## Appendix 3

### The inspection team

Arwyn Thomas HMI	Estyn	Reporting Inspector
Jassa Scott HMI	Estyn	Team Inspector
Angharad Reed HMI	Estyn	Team inspector
Iolo Dafydd HMI	Estyn	Team inspector
Mererid Stone HMI	Estyn	Team Inspector
Liam Kealy HMI	Estyn	Team Inspector
Stephen Lamb AI	Estyn	Team Inspector
Susan Willan HMI	Estyn	Team Inspector
Janice Thomas HMI	Estyn	Team Inspector
Gerard Kerslake HMI	Estyn	Team Inspector
Huw Lloyd Jones	Wales Audit Office	Team Inspector
Colin McKay	CSSIW	Team Inspector
Graham Longster	Pembrokeshire County Council	Peer Assessor
Jackie Walley	Denbighshire County Council	Nominee