

Meeting of:	<b>Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>Monday, 03 March 2025</b>
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Learning and Culture
Report Title:	Reading in the Vale of Glamorgan
Purpose of Report:	To provide Members with an overview of reading in Vale of Glamorgan schools.
Report Owner:	Elizabeth Jones, Director of Learning and Skills
Responsible Officer:	Carys Pritchard, Principal Improvement Partner
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	Councillor Rhiannon Birch, Cabinet Member for Education, Arts and the Welsh Language Morwen Thomas, Head of Standards and Provision
Policy Framework:	The recommendations of this report are within existing policy framework and budget
<p><b>Executive Summary:</b></p> <p>This report, which is shown in Appendix A, provides an overview of reading in Vale of Glamorgan schools. It covers the national context, local authority insights from Estyn inspection reports and school development plan priorities, support from the Central South Consortium (CSC), challenges, and effective practices for promoting reading.</p> <p>In 2021, the Welsh Government prioritised reading and oracy to reduce the attainment gap. Declining reading scores in Wales were noted in PISA tests and in national personalised assessment data from 2018 to 2023. Measures announced in 2024 include placing the Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF) on a statutory footing along with the creation of additional guidance and resources.</p> <p>In terms of the Vale of Glamorgan, Estyn inspected 24 schools (3 secondary, 21 primary) from February 2022 to December 2024. Primary schools showed progress in reading skills, but some pupils struggled with fluency and comprehension. Secondary schools demonstrated strong reading skills, though some pupils lacked frequent reading opportunities.</p>	

There has been a consistent focus on literacy and reading in school development plan priorities over the past three years. Priorities included improving reading standards, phonics, and fostering positive reading attitudes.

CSC offers a comprehensive professional learning (PL) programme to support reading in Vale of Glamorgan schools. Engagement data shows active participation from schools in reading-related PL. CSC also provides bespoke support to support schools with specific improvement priorities.

Challenges around reading include a declining reading standard in some schools, which is requiring targeted interventions. Equity of provision, especially for Welsh medium schools, remains a challenge.

Schools report positive developments in promoting a reading culture and examples include Cogan's Primary's Picture Book Award and Evenlode Primary's 'hook and book' curriculum approach.

## **Recommendation**

1. That members consider the report in Appendix A outlining reading in Vale of Glamorgan schools and to scrutinise and comment on the information provided.

## **Reason for Recommendation**

1. In order that Members are aware of the national context and local authority insights in relation to the development and support for reading in Vale of Glamorgan schools.

### **1. Background**

- 1.1 This report is written in response to a request from the Chair of the Learning and Culture Scrutiny for information on reading in Vale of Glamorgan schools.
- 1.2 The request is as a response to:
  - a news investigation led by ITV on reading methods used in schools in Wales
  - a report from Welsh Government on the Patterns in reading and numeracy attainment: from 2018/19 to 2022/23

### **2. Key Issues for Consideration**

- 2.1 In a national context, English and Welsh medium data for the online personal assessment demonstrate a decline in reading standards. There has also been a notable drop in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) scores since 2018.
- 2.2 Welsh Government has announced measures to address these concerns, including placing the Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF) on a statutory footing and the creation of additional guidance and resources.
- 2.3 Estyn inspection findings over the last three years for the Vale of Glamorgan highlight both strengths and areas for improvement in reading across primary and secondary schools. There were no specific recommendations relating to reading identified in the Estyn inspection reports for Vale of Glamorgan schools.
- 2.4 In terms of school development plans, there has been a consistent focus over the last three years on literacy. During this time, around half of the schools in the Vale of Glamorgan have annually identified a school development priority relating to literacy. Within this timeframe, a few schools in every academic year have identified a specific recommendation relating to reading.
- 2.5 A comprehensive range of professional learning (PL) opportunities is provided by Central South Consortium to support schools in delivering an effective reading curriculum. Bespoke support is available for schools with specific improvement priorities. Case studies are provided outlining examples of successful interventions and strategies used in various schools.

- 2.6 Similar to national trends, some schools in the Vale of Glamorgan report a declining reading standards.
- 2.7 There remain challenges in ensuring equitable reading provision, particularly for Welsh medium schools.
- 2.8 Successful initiatives are in place to promote a positive reading culture in schools, such as book awards and innovative curriculum approaches.

### **3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?**

- 3.1 The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 (“the 2015 Act”) requires the Council to think about the long-term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities, and each other and to prevent persistent problems such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change.
- 3.2 Support for learners contributes to the Council's Wellbeing Objectives drawn from the Corporate Plan 2020-25. There is specific alignment with our wellbeing objectives to work with and for our communities and to support learning, employment, and sustainable economic growth.
- 3.3 This report recognises the importance of reading in schools and effective provision to develop pupils’ reading skills.
- 3.4 This report recognises the partnership working between the Local Authority, schools, and Central South Consortium in providing comprehensive support for schools to develop pupils’ reading.

### **4. Climate Change and Nature Implications**

- 4.1 There are no climate change and nature implications resulting from this report.

### **5. Resources and Legal Considerations**

#### **Financial**

- 5.1 There are no financial implications resulting from this report.

#### **Employment**

- 5.2 There are no employment implications arising from this report.

#### **Legal (Including Equalities)**

- 5.3 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

### **6. Background Papers**

- 6.1 None

## Vale of Glamorgan Learning and Culture Scrutiny Report

### Reading in Vale of Glamorgan Schools

#### Introduction

This report is written in response to a request from the Chair of the Learning and Culture Scrutiny for information on reading in Vale of Glamorgan schools. The report outlines:

- the national context for reading
- from a local authority context, information regarding reading from Estyn inspection reports and school development plan priorities
- the support provided for reading via Central South Consortium (CSC)
- challenges around reading
- effective practice for the promotion of reading

The report draws on evidence from:

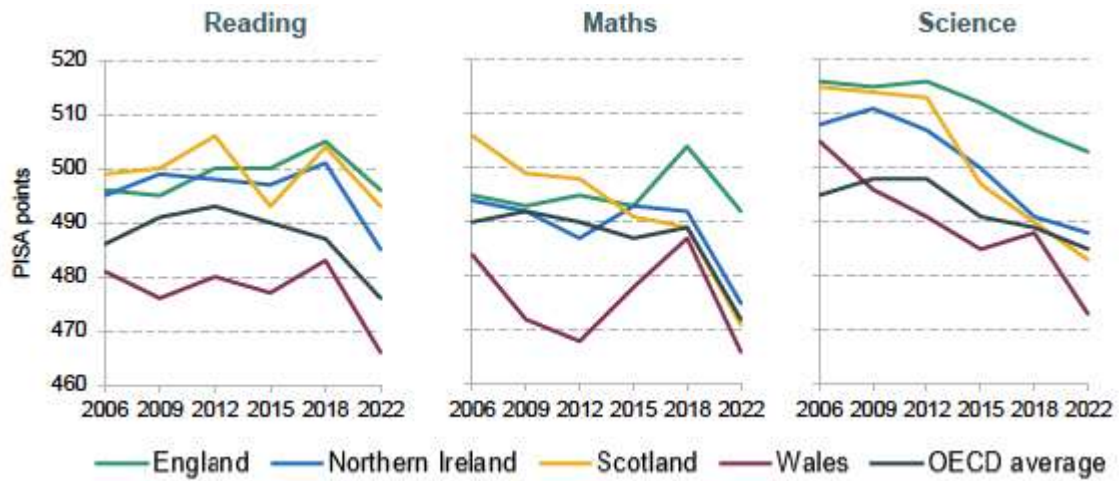
- 24 Estyn inspection reports carried out in Vale of Glamorgan schools between February 2022 and December 2024
- analysis of school development plan priorities for 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25
- engagement figures for Vale of Glamorgan schools in reading related professional learning hosted by CSC for 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25
- schools who have received reading related bespoke support from CSC during 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25
- discussions undertaken between Improvement Partners and Curriculum and Professional Learning officers from CSC and school leaders and staff

The report also features several short case studies from schools across the Vale of Glamorgan. This is to exemplify points raised in the report and to give a flavour of how reading is being developed and promoted in schools across the local authority.

#### 1.National context

In the Autumn term of 2021, Welsh Government announced two national priorities: reading and oracy. The then minister for Education and Welsh Language, Jeremy Miles, stated that *“Improving reading skills is essential if we are to make the progress that we all want to see in reducing the attainment gap between pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers.”*

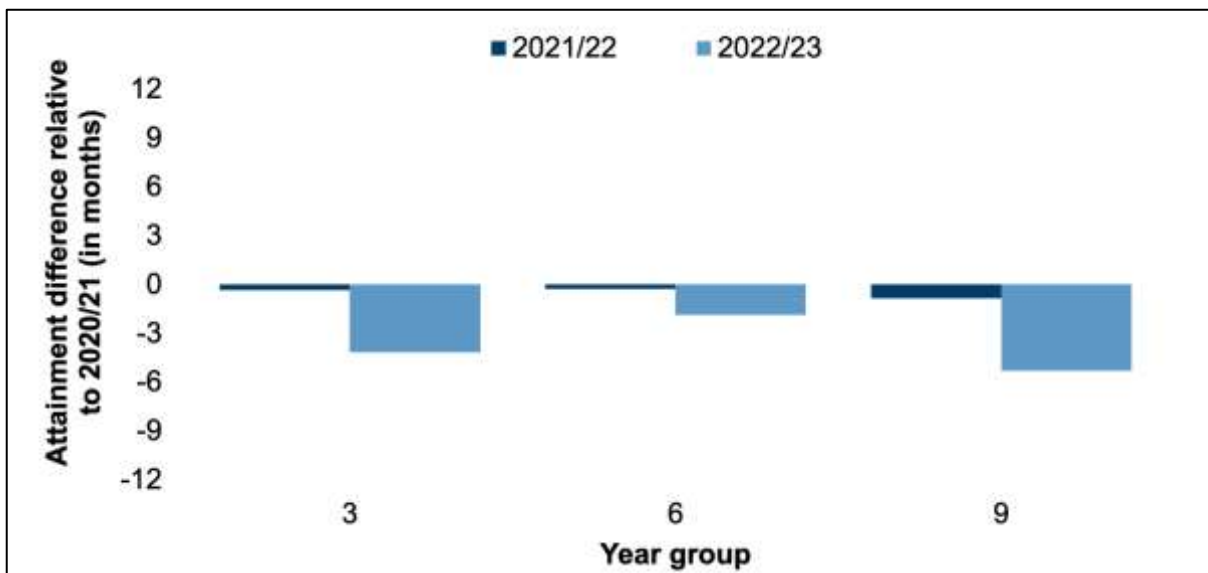
In the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) tests, Wales has seen a declining trend in reading scores since 2018.



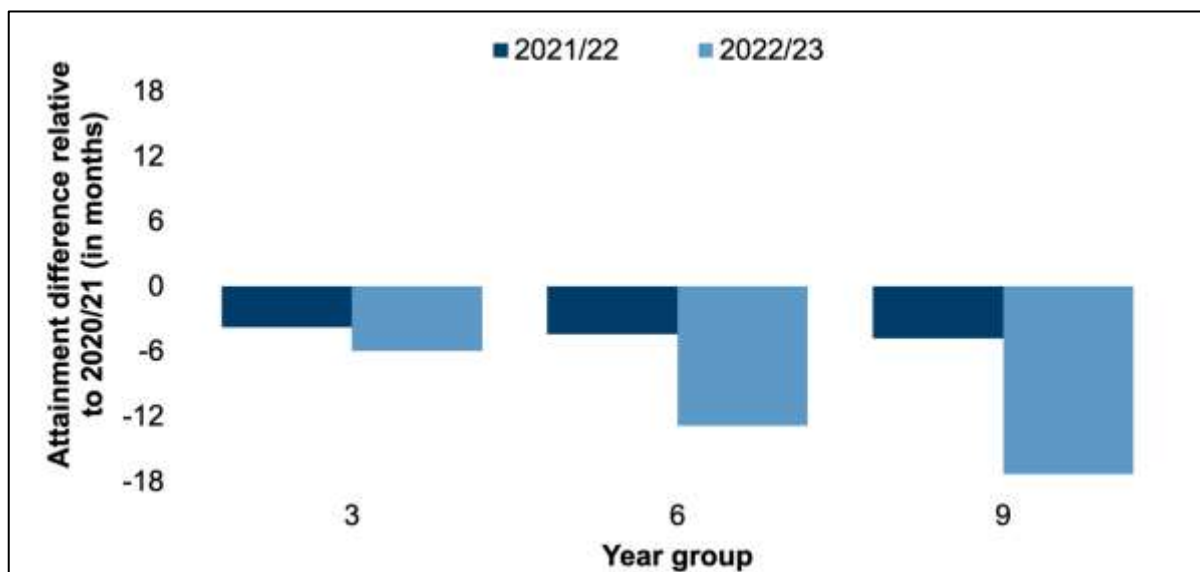
.Source: Based on figures 7.13–7.15 in Sizmur et al. (2019); OECD (2023)

This mirrors the trends identified in the national Online Personalised Assessments for reading.

In 2021/22, English Reading attainment was similar to 2020/21. Then between 2021/22 and 2022/23 there was a change; pupils in 2022/23 demonstrated three months’ lower attainment on average across all year groups compared to pupils in 2021/22.



In 2021/22, pupils' attainment was lower on average in Welsh Reading relative to pupils in 2020/21, equivalent to five months' difference on average across all year groups.



Source based on Figure 2 in *Patterns in reading and numeracy attainment: from 2018/19 to 2022/23 (2023)*

In October 2024, following a news investigation led by ITV, the Cabinet Secretary for Education, Lynne Neagle, announced a raft of measures to address these concerns. They include placing the Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF) on a statutory footing along with the creation of additional guidance and resources related to reading. The full details of the statement can be found [here](#).

## 2. Vale of Glamorgan Context

Since February 2022, Estyn have inspected a total of 24 schools in the Vale of Glamorgan; this has included three secondary schools and 21 primary schools. As part of the Estyn inspection process, inspectors consider how pupils acquire their reading skills, and the progress made in reading across the school.

Estyn reports for Vale of Glamorgan primary schools comment on:

- appropriate range of phonic strategies to read familiar and unfamiliar words
- evidence of developing accuracy, fluency, expression and understanding
- evidence of progress in reading more challenging texts
- evidence that pupils appreciate books and develop an enjoyment of reading
- evidence of pupils engaging well in shared reading experiences
- pupils demonstrating the ability to read for a range of purposes, across the curriculum
- pupils altering their tone of voice to convey meaning

- pupils developing their higher-order reading skills purposefully to gather information from different sources
- older pupils using skills such as inference to enhance their learning

In addition, Estyn comment on:

- a few younger pupils reading texts accurately but lacking fluency and understanding; this limits the progress they make in other aspects of their learning
- pupils not always using appropriate strategies to work out the meaning of unfamiliar words
- a few older pupils struggling to understand what they have read

Estyn reports for Vale of Glamorgan secondary schools comment on:

- pupils' ability to read purposefully to locate and extract information from a variety of texts and sources
- the ability to read aloud with confidence and good expression
- the ability to skim and scan texts independently and summarise relevant key information
- the ability to interpret a range of sources in order to identify or defend a viewpoint
- the ability to summarise and synthesise, for example when using a range of historical sources to draw conclusion

In addition, Estyn comment on:

- pupils not reading aloud frequently enough across a minority of subjects
- pupils not developing their reading skills sufficiently due to limited opportunities to do so
- pupils not possessing reading strategies to help them to understand unfamiliar words

There were no specific recommendations relating to reading identified in the Estyn inspection reports for Vale of Glamorgan schools.

### **3. School Development Plan (SDP) Priorities**

Over the last three academic years, the number of school development plan priorities relating to literacy and reading has remained consistent. For 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25, around half of the schools in the Vale of Glamorgan have annually identified a school development priority relating to literacy. Within this timeframe, a few schools in every academic year have identified a specific priority relating to reading.



The focus of the reading priorities has been primarily on improving standards in reading, including reading comprehension and higher order reading skills. Other areas of reading identified for improvement include developing a clear approach to phonics, ensuring consistency in the teaching of reading across the school, and developing pupils' positive attitudes to reading, including improvements in home reading.

**Y Bont Faen Primary** identified the need to further develop their approach to the teaching of literacy skills, including phonics development and reading. The target was included as a main priority in the school development plan for 2023-24. The school had the opportunity to trial a published phonics scheme and intervention programme. The school took the opportunity to engage with both programmes in order to address the improvement priority.

### **Actions Taken**

#### **Professional Learning**

- Foundation learning teaching and support staff trained in the phonics programme.
- Literacy lead attended the training for the intervention programme and disseminated information to relevant staff.

#### **Assessment**

- All pupils screened using an online assessment tool.
- Literacy lead and class teachers identified pupils for the intervention programme, using information from the online assessment screening, standardised reading scores and teacher assessment data.
- Baseline assessment undertaken for pupils engaging with the intervention programme.

#### **Teaching and Learning**

- Leaders identified and implemented changes in how they approach the teaching of reading, ensuring specific spelling patterns and related word level vocabulary are taught systematically.
- Staff used planning aligned to the phonics programme to ensure consistency in approach.
- Staff developed a shared understanding of expectations for each year group, to ensure most pupils leave their progression step at their appropriate stage.
- Cluster progression documents actively used to support planning for progression.

#### **Monitoring**

- Half termly/ termly assessments for pupils from Reception to Year 6 analysed, with data used to identify the need for further support.
- Interventions were evaluated termly throughout the academic year.
- The impact of phonics programme was mentioned, as part of a wider evaluation of literacy. For example, strong pupil progress and a high standard of reading was noted by the senior leadership team and CSC Improvement Partner when observing lessons to further develop pupils' writing skills.

### **Impact**

- The senior leadership team report that the phonics scheme, trialled in 2023-24, provides a clear structure for staff to follow and ensures a consistent and systematic approach to the teaching of phonological awareness and reading. The online programme increases the school's capacity and provision for reading and phonic development, including support for less able readers.
- All foundation learners made at least expected progress with phonic development, with around half in Reception class making above expected progress.
- In Reception, around half of pupils made above expected progress in their reading standardised scores and a minority of pupils in both Year 1 and 2 made above expected progress.
- Nearly all pupils accessing the intervention programme became more accurate with their decoding and increased their fluency.

## **4. CSC support for reading**

Reading has always been at the heart of professional learning and support for schools at CSC. Professional learning (PL) opportunities are designed to empower schools to deliver an effective reading curriculum.

CSC continues to offer a comprehensive range of PL opportunities to meet the various needs of schools across the region in developing a rigorous reading curriculum and ensuring high-quality teaching and learning in reading.

There is no charge to schools in the region for their engagement with any CSC PL and support. The recent [CSC special bulletin](#) for reading details some of the professional learning and resources we use to support this national priority.

Opportunities to engage in profession learning related to reading this academic year have included:

- Evidence based approaches to reading webinar series covering:
  - The science of reading
  - Effective implementation of a phonics programme

- Beyond Decoding: Developing reading comprehension
- Beyond Decoding: Pedagogy for vocabulary instruction
- Developing a rigorous reading curriculum
- Reading intervention: what does the evidence say
- Evidence informed approaches to reading for children who are non-speaking/minimally verbal
- Datblygu Darllen: Arweiniad i godi safonau darllen
- Ailystyried Darllen
- Tric a Chlic Welsh medium phonics
- Reading Reconsidered
- Words Matter: Supporting the teaching of vocabulary
- Effective teaching of early reading skills
- An introduction to Group Guided Reading
- Effective teaching of guided reading
- Developing a rigorous reading curriculum

<b>Academic Year</b>	<b>Number of Practitioners engaged</b>	<b>Number of Schools engaged</b>
2022-23	31	15
2023-24	33	13
2024-25 (September to December only)	19	11

*Vale engagement data in reading related CSC PL 2022-25*

**St Cyres School** has engaged with CSC professional learning to develop the rigour of reading across the school.

The training has specifically influenced English curriculum design with there now being a schema map in places which focuses on progression and sequencing of reading texts - directly influenced by the session on text complexity. The school has incorporated the reading into classroom-based practice and pupils have increased the fluency and accuracy of reading as a result.

This video exemplifies approach called ‘Control the Game’ which is designed to develop fluency and expression in reading. Here you will see a Year 9 SEN group tackling a challenging text (JFK speech) and responding to questions linked to the text. <https://youtu.be/UluyKmYcki8>

This second clip exemplifies the same strategy used with Year 7 pupils- exploring a linked non-fiction text to the class reader ‘Wonder’. Here you are also seeing another strategy in use- the teacher is using knowledge building and embedding non-fiction to support comprehension.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cnc5F1lucaQ>

## 5. CSC Bespoke support

Bespoke support is available to all CSC schools related to their school improvement priorities where the support required is additional to and different from the published regional PL opportunities or the work of the Improvement Partner (IP). Bespoke support can be provided to individual schools and cluster or groups of schools working together on shared improvement priorities.

<b>Academic Year</b>	<b>Number bespoke support requests for reading</b>
2022-23	4
2023-24	3
2024-25 (September to December)	3

In **St Richard Gwyn Catholic High School** CSC has been providing bespoke support for literacy across the curriculum since January 2024, meeting with senior leaders, middle leaders, and practitioners at the schools' request. Additionally, the Literacy Coordinator attended CSC's 3-day Reading Reconsidered professional learning programme.

As a result of engaging with CSC there is an improved understanding for leaders and practitioners on the principles of effective teaching of reading. In the post-session evaluation, one practitioner commented, *"I left the session with a clear vision of what to implement in my classroom to support my students and how to do it. I felt equipped with strategies which were relevant and useful."* In addition, 37 of the 45 respondents detailed a specific commitment to act, and these highlighted a strong understanding of the principles, strategies, and approaches shared during the session.

**Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Morgannwg** have recognised the need to improve the standards in disciplinary reading skills and refresh their knowledge of higher order reading skills. To support this work, secondary practitioners at the school have received PL on pedagogy developing reading across the curriculum. This PL was delivered by CSC in a bespoke manner to secondary staff at the school via an INSET session at the school. Many aspects of the PL also addressed the recommendations raised in Estyn's thematic report on [Welsh Reading Standards \(10-14 year old learners\)](#).

All departments saw the benefits of introducing some of the strategies introduced and time was provided to discuss how they could be incorporated into current schemes of work.

The school plans to share good practice and evidence where these strategies have been used successfully in a staff meeting in the spring or summer term 2025.

In 2022-23, **Dinas Powys Primary School** contacted CSC for support with one of the school's improvement priorities. School leaders had highlighted the need to refine the school's provision for Language, Literacy and Communication including the development of a clear approach to the teaching of phonics.

- CSC met with senior leaders and agreed a support plan for the school. The school's literacy leader had experience working with older learners but limited experience of teaching younger learners and was keen to improve their knowledge and understanding of the teaching of phonics.
- CSC worked with the literacy leader and school senior leader working within foundation learning to evaluate current phonics provision and teaching in the school. This information was used to inform whole school staff training.
- Following the staff training, senior leaders developed an action plan to develop the teaching of phonics.
- Senior leaders approached this work as whole school focus even though staff working with older pupils did not directly teach phonics. This ensured that the improvement work on phonics' teaching was seen as a shared enterprise across the school, and also made it clear for all staff the impact that effective teaching of phonics can have on all pupils.
- In the past, the school had been separate infant and junior schools and when the school amalgamated as one primary, the literacy leader for the whole school was based in the junior school. As a result, they felt a lack of confidence and knowledge in effective phonics provision and teaching. Being able to work with an experienced practitioner based in the foundation learning classes, and accessing a range of guidance and resources provided by CSC helped to develop their confidence to lead this area across the school.
- The school was inspected in May 2024 and Estyn reported that, 'The school's provision for the development of pupils' literacy, language and communication skills is strong. Leaders have established a clear, progressive approach to teaching reading from an early age. As they move through the school most pupils build on their early reading skills successfully and develop their fluency, expression and understanding well.'

During the 2021-22 academic year, reading was a priority for **Gladstone Primary** and the school received bespoke support from CSC on guided reading. Guided Reading is a small group reading instruction session lasting 15-25 minutes. It is designed to provide differentiated teaching that supports pupils in developing reading skills. For the pupil, guided group reading lessons mean reading and talking (and sometimes writing) about a variety of fiction and non-fiction texts.

For the teacher, guided reading lessons mean taking the opportunity for careful text selection and intentional and intensive teaching of reading strategies.

As part of the bespoke support arrangement, staff received PL on how to develop effective guided reading approaches, and the subject leaders worked with the CSC primary literacy specialist to develop resources for staff.

Joint monitoring involving the school subject leader and the CSC primary literacy specialist demonstrated that teachers, as a result of the PL, had consolidated their understanding of what makes effective reading teaching. They developed their knowledge of how to manage guided reading in the classroom and how to develop pupils' reading skills through effective scaffolding and questioning. This led to a consistent and effective approach to the teaching of guided reading from Years 3-6.

Monitoring also identified that most pupils enjoy guided reading and have a positive attitude towards reading in general. Pupils were able to answer questions about the text and use a range of reading strategies when faced with unfamiliar words.

## **6. Challenges around reading**

Similar to the trends identified in the national context, some schools in the Vale of Glamorgan report declining reading standards. In both the primary and secondary phases schools are needing to adapt their provision to address these deficits.

**Romilly Primary** identified that a significant percentage of pupils moving from a targeted year group were below the expected level in reading. The original school development plan (SDP) target was to close the gap for vulnerable learners, but this was revised to focus specifically on improving reading outcomes for these learners. In order to address this priority, the school has:

### **1. Provided targeted support and interventions:**

- a. Three experienced teachers and two skilled learning support assistants (LSAs) provided tailored interventions (daily, weekly, small group or 1:1 support).
- b. Specific target groups were identified in each class for focused attention.

2. **Ensured a focus on reading across the school:**
  - a. Reading was made a high priority across the school, with a whole school reading challenge over the summer holidays to engage pupils.
  - b. Workshops were held for parents to help them support their children's reading at home.
  - c. Daily activities like "Sound Blast" and high-frequency word practice were implemented to reinforce learning.
  - d. High-quality texts for a range of abilities were made available in class libraries, and sound mats were placed on all tables for support.
3. **Ensured a data-driven approach:**
  - a. Data from Wellcomm, Read Write Inc (RWI), GL, and Welsh Government online personalised assessments, alongside teacher assessments, was shared with staff to ensure targeted in-class support.
  - b. Vulnerable pupils were given additional, personalised support based on their needs.
  - c. Tracking systems were used to monitor progress, and professional conversations about individual learners were encouraged.
4. **Promoted a positive reading culture:**
  - a. Efforts were made to promote a positive attitude toward reading, with consistent praise for progress, no matter how small.
  - b. There was a focus on fostering a love of reading through classroom activities and incentives, like reading challenges during the holidays.
5. **Engaged with parents / carers:**
  - a. Parents / carers were kept informed about their child's progress, especially if they were behind.
  - b. Senior leadership team members sent letters to vulnerable groups, and workshops were conducted to empower parents to support their child's reading development.
6. **Provided professional development:**
  - a. Staff received training to ensure high-quality teaching practices, with opportunities for staff to pursue further professional learning.

**Impact:**

Following the targeted interventions, 86% of a targeted year group have made expected, higher, or much higher progress in reading within a five-month period according to recent GL assessments.

This focused and collaborative approach to addressing reading gaps has clearly yielded impressive results, demonstrating the power of targeted interventions, data-informed decisions, and strong communication with parents. Whilst the school are



pleased with these results, they also acknowledge that this is a journey, and it needs to remain a focus.

**Llangan Primary School** identified that while pupils had strong baseline scores upon entering school, this did not always translate into strong progress in phonics and reading. To address this, the school prioritised high-quality teaching in phonics, early literacy, and reading.

### **Core Actions**

#### **1. Phonics and Early Literacy Focus**

- The school invested in a published phonics programme and are using it with greater fidelity to ensure systematic and effective phonics teaching.
- Regular staff meetings held to help leaders to deploy resources effectively and provide appropriate support.

#### **2. Targeted Support**

- Staff analyse data to identify pupils already behind or at risk of falling behind in reading.

#### **3. Reading Curriculum**

- Reading is taught discretely in streamed, small groups for younger pupils then group reading carousels introduced as the pupils move through the school.
- Opportunities to teach and apply reading skills are woven through the curriculum, for example during independent research activities.

#### **4. Reading Across the Curriculum and School-Wide Initiatives**

- Initiatives such as the *September Reading Challenge* encourages pupils to read as many books as they can in the first month of the school year, setting high expectations for reading from the outset.
- Workshops for parents and carers, author visits, and trips to events like the Hay Festival to immerse students in the joy of literature.
- A text is linked to each curriculum inquiry.
- Daily dedicated reading time.

#### **5. Monitoring**

- Regular data analysis and monitoring allows the school to adjust approaches and provide additional support as needed.

## Impact

Comparison of data from the end of the last academic year and the start of the spring term 2025 demonstrate the following impact:

- **Reception to Year 2:** Improvement from 11.6% to 62.5% of pupils meeting age-expectations in phonics.
- **Year 3:** Reduction from 39% to 6% of pupils with reading ages below their chronological age.
- **Year 4:** Reduction from 30% to 10% of pupils behind their chronological reading age.
- **Year 5:** 100% of pupils now have a reading age ahead of their chronological age.
- **Year 6:** 93% of pupils have a reading age of 15 years or more.

**Next steps** include:

- ongoing assessment and monitoring
- regular reading challenges
- expanding opportunities for pupils to apply their reading skills across the curriculum.

Secondary school headteachers have raised with the Director of Learning and Skills for the Vale of Glamorgan concerns regarding the impact low reading ages have on pupils' ability to access the curriculum. They report that differences in data used in the primary and secondary sector are exacerbating this issue. Secondary schools report that they are needing to make changes to the curriculum offer to address these issues.

**Whitmore High School** recognised the declining trends in reading on entry to Year 7 and how this was a barrier to pupils accessing the curriculum. In order to address this the school now provides additional literacy and basic skills support for targeted pupils as part of their Humanities provision. In Years 7, 8 and 9, there is one Humanities class that provides a strong focus on developing reading and pupils' literacy skills alongside their Humanities work. This class is taught by English specialists. This is a 'revolving door' provision so when pupils are ready, they go back to mainstream Humanities lessons. The school has increased the number of pupils eligible for free school meals (eFSM) in this class to ensure that they strengthen their literacy skills to access the curriculum.

Equity of provision continues to be a challenge for schools across Wales and the Vale of Glamorgan. For Welsh medium schools, the ability to access standardised tests, professional learning and resources is limited with many publishers citing the limited market size as a reason for not creating Welsh medium materials.

To address the lack of equity in provision for Welsh medium schools **CSC** has worked to develop a suite of materials and resources to target the Welsh medium sector.

### **1. CSC standardised Reading Test**

This interdisciplinary project was led by Chris Newcombe of the Central South Consortium together with Dr Jonathan Morris and Dr Dylan Foster Evans of the School of Welsh, Cardiff University. The project has also benefited from the expertise of Dr Rosanna Stenner of the School of Psychology and Dr Geraint Palmer of the School of Mathematics. The aim was to develop a user-friendly reading test for monitoring the accuracy of children's reading in Welsh-medium schools for use by teachers, practitioners and schools across Wales. Further information about the test can be found [here](#).

### **2. Tric a Chlic Phonics**

CSC works in partnership to deliver Tric a Chlic phonics training to Welsh medium and English medium schools who wish to deliver a Welsh medium synthetic phonics programme.

### **3. Ailystyried darllen**

Following the success of the English medium programme, Reading Reconsidered, CSC developed a Welsh medium version of the programme which is which is designed to develop rigour, insight and precision in Welsh medium reading.

All **Welsh medium schools** in the Vale of Glamorgan use the 'Tric a Chlic' programme for the teaching of phonics. 'Tric a Chlic' is a synthetic phonics programme in Welsh for pupils aged 3 – 7. It encourages pupils to hear and recognise the sounds of letters, combine sounds to read, and to segment sounds to spell. The programme is divided into three stages: Cam 1, Cam 2 and Cam 3. In Cam 1 there is a focus on 2/3 letter words moving on to Cam 2 where is there a focus on four letter works and 2 syllable words. By Cam 3, there is a focus on multisyllabic words.

The program is used daily to strengthen the learners' phonics skills as they become familiar with sounds and combinations of letters in the process of starting to read. Almost every Welsh-medium primary school in the Vale of Glamorgan has attended the professional learning days in 2024 organised by CSC. The programme clearly

remains popular among teachers to develop learners' reading skills. Schools have further invested in 'Tric a Clic' by offering the professional learning to teaching assistants. This is proof of their commitment to the program and its successes in teaching reading skills to their pupils.

Another equity related issue raised by schools was the introduction of Curriculum for Wales and the opportunities for subsidiarity. In some cases, schools have reported that this has resulted in non-equitable reading provision in schools, for example, with some schools using more challenging texts than others. To address this CSC has supported some clusters to agree non-negotiables when planning for progression at transition points.

Nearly all language co-ordinators in **Welsh medium schools** in the Vale of Glamorgan have attended the Reconsidering Reading professional learning in Welsh. They have chosen the development of reading skills as their 2024-25 project. The schools have recognised the need to raise reading standards and improve pupils' outcomes in the Welsh Government online personal assessments. The project involves choosing specific novels from Year 3 to 6 and creating resources that target higher order reading skills – both factual and creative.

Year 3	Bwystfil Bryn Bugail	The Twits
Year 4	Sw Sara Mai	The Snow Spider
Year 5	Ta Ta Tryweryn	Why the Whales Came
Year 6	Pluen	The Boy in the Back of the Class

The schools work collaboratively to plan and author resources on these novels underpinned by the principles of the Reconsider Reading training. Also, since Estyn's thematic reports have also been published on the standards of Welsh and English reading skills, tasks will also target the advanced reading skills as recommended in their reports. Under the guidance of the secondary school subject leads and CSC, the resource will be the focus of the language co-ordinators termly meetings.

This consistency in approaches to reading across the cluster allows that valuable resources will be available to teachers. In addition, many schools have been part of Voice 21 or Ein Llais Ni programmes through CSC on promoting oracy skills. The professional discussions on pedagogy, teachers' experience and research play a large part in the project. This expertise is used to create resources that incorporate the many elements of literacy.

Introducing the class novel back in the classes promotes the study of literature that is an important aspect of the Curriculum for Wales, giving learners a solid foundation when transitioning to secondary school. All learners are required to study both Welsh and English novels in the new GCSE Welsh and English Language and Literature specifications. Under the guidance of language experts, the final resource will be comprehensive and include a variety of tasks that guarantee learners' progress in their literacy skills.

## **7. Practice to share across the Vale**

Many schools in the Vale report positive developments to support the development of a reading culture in their schools. For example:

### **Cogan Primary School**

Since launching their first award in 2018, the Cogan Picture Book Award has gone from strength to strength, engaging the children in exercising their pupil voice as judges of an award which has made an impact at a local, regional and national level. It has increased the amount of reading for pleasure and critical interest in books throughout the school and helped swell the stock of quality literature. Themes over the last few years have included diversity, friendship, biodiversity and heroes.

Pupils were actively engaged in the award, from whittling the year's longlist down to a shortlist, before voting for the eventual winner which involves the whole school. The books were read in story clubs and assemblies, group reading times and special afternoons where the whole collection could be borrowed by a class. Key to the process were the individual 'ratings booklets' for each pupil from Year 2 upwards, while the youngest children were asked to contribute to class decisions.

The awards have brought the school to the notice of influential bodies such as the Books Council of Wales which has led to other exciting opportunities, such as taking part in selecting books for their Caru Darllen/ Love Reading campaign.

Although Cogan is now taking a break from its annual awards, they have provided other schools in the Vale of Glamorgan and in neighbouring authorities with information to help them run their own-themed picture book award.

### **Evenlode Primary School**

Having used research and experience to construct and refine their curriculum, Evenlode Primary understand that pupils learn best when connections are made across the experiences they have. They ensure that they build on these links in a systematic and structural way. As a result, they have developed a ‘hook and book’ approach to their curriculum.

The school has thought carefully about key contexts and how learning is connected through the different Areas of Learning and Experience. There is an overarching ‘hook’ for pupils’ learning over half term / term which provides the context for all learning. There is also a novel or series of linked texts linked to each ‘hook’. The novel is the ‘pivot’ which links Areas of Learning and Experience together.

Examples include:

<b>‘Hook’</b>	<b>‘Book’</b>
Adventure	‘Hello Lighthouse’ by Sophie Blackall
Community	‘Cool Architecture’ by Simon Armstrong
Growth	‘Jasper Beanstalk’ by Mick Inkpen

The positive impact of this approach was reported by Estyn in the school’s inspection in April 2024. In reference to the school’s curriculum Estyn reported that, ‘the school’s ‘Hook and Book’ focus fosters a growing culture of enthusiasm for reading across classes.’

### **Ysgol Sant Baruc**

In 2023, Ysgol Sant Baruc come up with a new idea for World Book Day that has been acclaimed by parents and pupils alike. The school decided that rather than asking pupils to dress up as a character from a book, they would instead host a book swap where every child could bring in a book that they would like to swap.

As part of the book swap, pupils were invited to bring in pre-loved books in good condition, with a maximum of ten books per person. For each book received for the book swap, pupils were given a ‘Swap Token’. Time was allocated then on World Book Day for pupils to browse and choose a book from the Swap Shop. Pupils were allowed to bring home the same number of books that they brought in to the Swap Shop.

The initiative was very well received by families, particularly in recognising the pressure that is usually associated with World Book Day to come up with an outfit, many at great expense in a cost-of-living crisis where money is tight. The pupils thoroughly enjoyed the activity, threw themselves into the idea and were thrilled to swap books with each other. It certainly proved a very popular way for pupils to share

their love of literature with their peers; as a result, it was repeated as part of World Book Day in 2024.

### **Yr Ornest Lyfrau – Book Quiz**

Two Welsh medium primaries participated in the 2024 Book Quiz, **Ysgol Pen y Garth** and **Ysgol Sant Curig**. This offers schools the opportunity to read and enjoy Welsh literature. Both schools had excellent team discussions and created a video to promote Welsh novels.

## **8. Next steps**

- Consider how cluster working could aid the local authority to support improved academic transition, with a specific focus on reading data and equitable provision.
- Consider how partnership working and work with external agencies can support schools to promote reading.
- Consider how the work of improvement partners could further support schools to monitor the impact of the reading provision, broker support where needed and identify practice for sharing.
- Consider how the local authority could work in collaboration with CSC and other partners to share effective practice related to reading.
- Consider how the local authority will work with the regional professional learning service to support any national developments in relation to reading, once further information has been received.