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Contact:/Cysylltwch â: Democratic Services



**THIS IS A MEETING WHICH THE PUBLIC ARE ENTITLED TO ATTEND**

8th January 2020

Dear Sir/Madam

**EDUCATION AND LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

A meeting of the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee will be held in Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Ebbw Vale on Wednesday, 15th January, 2020 at 10.00 am.

***Please note that a pre and post meeting will be held 30 minutes prior to the start and following the conclusion of the meeting for members of the committee.***

Yours faithfully

Michelle Morris  
Managing Director

**AGENDA**

**Pages**

**1. SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION**

You are welcome to use Welsh at the meeting a minimum notice period of 3 working days is required should you wish to do so. A simultaneous translation

We welcome correspondence in the medium of Welsh or English. / Croesawn ohebiaith trwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg neu'r Saesneg.

will be provided if requested.

2. **APOLOGIES**  
To receive.
3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS**  
To consider any declarations of interests and dispensations made.
4. **EDUCATION & LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES** 5 - 10  
To receive the Minutes of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee held on 4<sup>th</sup> December, 2019.  
  
(Please note the Minutes are submitted for points of accuracy only)
5. **ACTION SHEET - 4TH DECEMBER 2019** 11 - 12  
To receive the action sheet.
6. **EXECUTIVE DECISION SHEET** 13 - 14  
To receive the Executive Decision Sheet.
7. **PUPIL EXCLUSIONS** 15 - 22  
To consider the report of the Corporate Director for Education.
8. **21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS PROGRAMME - GATEWAY REVIEW** 23 - 42  
To consider the report of the Head of Education Transformation.
9. **EDUCATION WORKFORCE SICKNESS ABSENCE PERFORMANCE** 43 - 50  
To consider the report of the Corporate Director Education and the Head of Organisational Development.
10. **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME - 26TH FEBRUARY 2020** 51 - 54

To receive the report.

To: Councillor H. Trollope (Chair)  
Councillor J. Millard (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor D. Bevan  
Councillor M. Cook  
Councillor G. A. Davies  
Councillor L. Elias  
Councillor W. Hodgins  
Councillor J. Holt  
Councillor C. Meredith  
Councillor J. C. Morgan  
Councillor K. Pritchard  
Councillor K. Rowson  
Councillor T. Smith  
Councillor B. Summers  
Councillor S. Thomas  
T. Baxter  
A. Williams

All other Members (for information)  
Manager Director  
Chief Officers

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**COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT**

**REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE EDUCATION & LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**SUBJECT: EDUCATION & LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 4<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER, 2019**

**REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT OFFICER**

**PRESENT: COUNCILLOR H. TROLLOPE (CHAIR)**

Councillors: D. Bevan  
 M. Cook  
 G.A. Davies  
 W. Hodgins  
 C. Meredith  
 J.C. Morgan  
 K. Pritchard  
 K. Rowson  
 T. Smith  
 B. Summers  
 S. Thomas

**AND:** Corporate Director of Education  
 Service Inclusion Manager  
 Principal Challenge Advisor EAS  
 Education Welfare Officer  
 Scrutiny & Democratic Officer / Advisor

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>ACTION</b>
<b>No. 1</b>	<p><b><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></b></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
<b>No. 2</b>	<p><b><u>APOLOGIES</u></b></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Millard, L. Elias and J. Holt.</p>	

<p><b>No. 3</b></p>	<p><b><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></b></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p>	
<p><b>No. 4</b></p>	<p><b><u>EDUCATION &amp; LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></b></p> <p>The Minutes of the Education &amp; Learning Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> October, 2019 were submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
<p><b>No. 5</b></p>	<p><b><u>ACTION SHEET – 25<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER, 2019</u></b></p> <p>The action sheet arising from the meeting of the Education &amp; Learning Scrutiny Committee held on 25<sup>th</sup> October, 2019 was submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the action sheet be noted.</p>	
<p><b>No. 6</b></p>	<p><b><u>EDUCATION &amp; LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></b></p> <p>The Minutes of the Education &amp; Learning Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> November, 2019 were submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
<p><b>No. 7</b></p>	<p><b><u>ACTION SHEET – 6<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, 2019</u></b></p> <p>The action sheet arising from the meeting of the Education &amp; Learning Scrutiny Committee held on 6<sup>th</sup> November, 2019 was submitted, whereupon:-</p> <p><b><u>Item 6 – Management of Pupil Places and the School Estate</u></b></p> <p>A Member referred to the increased demand for places at Pen-y-Cwm Special School. The Service Inclusion Manager said that the service looked at trends and the primary needs of the pupil coming into the system e.g. Autism, profound learning difficulties, etc. to project forward.</p>	

	<p>Historically it had not been possible to capture data on 0-3 year olds. The Inclusion Service managed and monitored uptake and placement at Pen-y-Cwm school and a consultation document and report was being prepared to look at increasing capacity at the school.</p> <p>A Member enquired regarding out of county pupils and what areas in the borough pupils came from. The Service Inclusion Manager said that currently Pen-y-Cwm school was not accepting pupils from out of county for a range of reasons and it was reasonable that places be reserved for pupils living in Blaenau Gwent.</p> <p>The Chair requested that in relation to the River Centre and Pen-y-Cwm schools that a breakdown of the numbers of children attending the schools against their catchment area schools be provided. The Service Inclusion Manager said that this information could be provided as a percentage on future reporting.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the action sheet be noted.</p>	Service Inclusion Manager
No. 8	<p><b><u>IMPROVING SCHOOLS PROGRAMME 2019</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Strategic Education Improvement Manager which was presented to provide Members with an overview of those schools, over the last 3 years that have presented as a cause for concern, their progress and the work delivered to continue to support them to improve.</p> <p>The Director of Education spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>A Member referred to categorisations and commented that school categorisations could be affected if a school performed poorly in one subject area. The Director said that if it was a core subject any decline or incline would have an exaggerated impact on categorisations. Schools were trying to move away from this process as good work could sometimes be overlooked and try to make it more distributed in the way schools were categorised.</p>	

A lengthy discussion ensued regarding correspondence from the Executive Member for Education in relation to a Blaenau Gwent school. Members requested that the Executive Member for Education provide a response regarding correspondence about a meeting relating to a Blaenau Gwent School.

The Committee agreed this course of action.

In response to a Member's question regarding the condition of Brynmawr Foundation school, the Director said that the school had been identified as needing refurbishment which would include disabled access.

A Member requested that information regarding the movement of school categorisations be presented in graph form. The Director of Education agreed that this information would be presented in colour graph form in future reporting.

Director of Education

In response to Members concerns regarding redundancies in schools, the Director said that Abertillery Learning Community had suffered some negative press attention which had not helped to recruit high quality teachers. She pointed out that a number of learning support assistants had been renewed and commented on the integral role of support assistants and confirmed that learning support assistants in Abertillery Learning Community responsible for pupils with additional learning needs would not be affected. A review of learning support assistants had been undertaken which took into account the teacher to pupil ratio set out in the national model. The number of learning support assistants at risk of redundancy had been devised from this calculation and schools and HR had supported learning support assistants through redeployment and other opportunities available.

A Member commented that the onus was on the school Governing Body to deliver first class education to pupils and deliver its budget. Another Member praised the good work of the Governing Body and staff at Ebbw Fawr for the improvements carried out.

The Chair expressed concern that due to roadworks being carried out near Brynmawr Foundation school pupils were missing certain aspects of sports play. The Director said



	<p>that Brynmawr Foundation school had a large playing space and roadworks at and around the site needed to progress quickly so that sports could resume.</p> <p>Members concurred that it was a positive report with 11 schools categorised as Green and 10 schools categorised as Yellow.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that the report be accepted as provided.</p>	
<p><b>No. 9</b></p>	<p><b><u>SCHOOL ATTENDANCE</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education which was presented to provide Members with the opportunity to scrutinise attendance data for Blaenau Gwent at Primary and Secondary school level for the academic year 2018-19.</p> <p>The Education Welfare Manager spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>A Member referred to the 1.6% persistent absenteeism, the Education Welfare Manager said that there were some inconsistencies with how individual schools dealt with persistent absenteeism, however, the Education Welfare Service worked closely with schools to promote regular school attendance and to embed new working practices which supported this aim. The Service was also looking at how other local authorities dealt with this issue. She added that the majority of absences were due to illness and not holidays.</p> <p>A Member commented that some parents were hard to reach and schools were working hard to promote good attendance and address persistent absenteeism.</p> <p>A Member enquired if school staff absenteeism was recorded. The Director of Education confirmed that school staff absences were reported to the relevant scrutiny committee i.e. school staff attendance data would be presented to the Education &amp; Learning Scrutiny Committee for consideration.</p>	

	<p>A Member referred to PISA data for 15 year olds. The Director of Education said that this was a sample across Wales. The headline was positive but not perfect and reflected the data accurately but the ambition remained to improve.</p> <p>In response to a Member’s question regarding truancy, the Education Welfare Manager said that absences were challenged and an officer would make a home visit if necessary. Schools shared good practice, one school had introduced battle boards and punctuality boards. Working as a multi agency to look at attendances provided a more effective service and strong links with Children’s Services enabled referrals to be made. The Director commented that forensics of high level data enabled the team to work more effectively using code analysis.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2, namely that the report be accepted as provided.</p>	
<p><b>No. 10</b></p>	<p><b><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – 15<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY, 2020</u></b></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chair of the Education &amp; Learning Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that the Education &amp; Learning Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for the meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> January, 2020 be approved.</p>	

**Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council**

**Action Sheet**

**Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee – Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> December 2019**

Item	Action to be Taken	By Whom	Action Taken																																	
7	<p><b><u>Action Sheet – 19<sup>th</sup> November 2019</u></b></p> <p><b>Management of Pupil Places and the School Estate:</b> In relation to the River Centre and Penycwm – Members requested a breakdown of the numbers of children attending the schools split by their catchment area.</p>	Gavin Metheringham Inclusion Services Manager	<p>Please find below the breakdown of pupils in our special schools by cluster.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Cluster</th> <th colspan="2">Pen-y-Cwm</th> <th colspan="2">River Centre</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td><b>Abertillery</b></td> <td>34</td> <td>24%</td> <td>18</td> <td>34%</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Ebbw Fawr</b></td> <td>50</td> <td>35%</td> <td>18</td> <td>34%</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Tredegar</b></td> <td>22</td> <td>16%</td> <td>9</td> <td>17%</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Brynmawr</b></td> <td>16</td> <td>11%</td> <td>8</td> <td>15%</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Other LAs</b></td> <td>19</td> <td>14%</td> <td>0</td> <td>0%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Cluster	Pen-y-Cwm		River Centre		<b>Abertillery</b>	34	24%	18	34%	<b>Ebbw Fawr</b>	50	35%	18	34%	<b>Tredegar</b>	22	16%	9	17%	<b>Brynmawr</b>	16	11%	8	15%	<b>Other LAs</b>	19	14%	0	0%
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8	<p><b><u>Improving Schools Programme</u></b></p> <p><b>Abertillery Learning Community:</b> Members requested for the Executive Member Education to provide a response regarding correspondence about a meeting relating to a Blaenau Gwent School.</p>	Executive Member / Scrutiny and Democratic Officer	Action completed																																	

Item	Action to be Taken	By Whom	Action Taken
	In relation to paragraph 6.1.2 – 6.1.4: Members requested that for future reporting the information be provided in graph form.	Lynette Jones, Corporate Director Education	All future graphs to be printed in colour.

Report to: **Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee – 15<sup>th</sup> January 2020**

Subject: **Executive Decision Sheet**

Item	Scrutiny Committee Recommendation	Executive Decision	Recommendation			Executive Member invited to attend if recommendation accepted in part or rejected
			Approved	Accepted in Part	Rejected	
<p>Executive Meeting 13<sup>th</sup> November 2019</p> <p>2019 School Performance for: End of Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2, Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 (Provisional Only)</p>	<p>The Committee recommended Option 1, that Members scrutinise the performance information and contribute to the continuous assessment of effectiveness by making appropriate recommendations to the Executive Committee; namely to continue to develop content and format in line with the changes in the interim Key Stage 4 measures over the coming year.</p>	<p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1, namely to accept the content and format of the report, noting feedback from Scrutiny, which sets out the requirement to continue to develop content and format in line with the changes in the interim Key Stage 4 measures over the coming years.</p>	<p>Scrutiny recommendation accepted.</p>			<p>No further action</p>

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# Agenda Item 7

*Executive Committee and Council only*

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: N/A

Committee: **Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **15<sup>th</sup> January 2020**

Report Subject: **Pupil Exclusions**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Joanne Collins, Executive Member for Education**

Report Submitted by: **Lynette Jones, Corporate Director of Education**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
12/12/19	17/12/19	20.12.19			15/01/20	29/01/20		

1. **Purpose of the Report**
  - 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide opportunity for members to scrutinise exclusion data for Blaenau Gwent at Primary and Secondary school for the academic year 2018-19.
2. **Scope and Background**
  - 2.1 The key Exclusion Guidance is the Welsh Government Guidance entitled: 'Exclusion from Schools and Pupil Referral Units' (April 2015).
  - 2.2 By law (section 52(4) of the Education Act 2002), head teachers, governing bodies, LAs and independent appeal panels must have regard to this guidance when making decisions on exclusion and administering the exclusion procedures and appeals. There is a strong expectation that the guidance will be followed unless there is good reason to depart from it.
  - 2.3 The guidance is very helpful and very prescriptive. For example, the guidance states that only the head teacher can exclude a learner and that unofficial exclusions – sending learners home unofficially – is unlawful. This approach means that the Education Directorate's guidance to schools, and the practice in place in schools, reflects the processes set out in the WG guidance.
  - 2.4 The WG guidance includes template letters for informing parents following an exclusion, and at every stage of the exclusion disciplinary process.
  - 2.5 The Council's Exclusion Guidance for schools, as well as including much of the WG guidance, provides additional local information such as process flowcharts, a standardised reporting format and a checklist for head teachers to ensure that the decision to exclude has been carefully considered and is being used as a last resort.

2.6 Section 6.1 of this report provides the performance information data relating to exclusions.

### 3. **Options for Recommendation**

The options for Scrutiny to consider are:

3.1 **Option 1:** Members are asked to scrutinise the information detailed within the report, thereby contributing to continuous self-evaluation prior to making appropriate recommendations to the Executive Committee.

3.2 **Option 2:** Accept the report as provided.

### 4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

4.1 This work supports the Corporate Plan - Education priority one namely to improve pupil outcomes, progress and wellbeing. It also contributes to priority three regarding supporting school leaders to help our pupils achieve their ambitions.

4.2 This work supports our strategic responsibilities with regard to Objective 2: to progress our Vision for Education (school led, self-improving system based on effective school to school collaboration), as well Objective 4: the securing of effective, efficient and economical high quality provision for our vulnerable learners.

4.3 This work also contributes to the Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan, specifically to help support children and young people to have confidence and aspiration to develop their full potential and places a high value on education and development.

### 5. **Implications Against Each Option**

#### 5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

The Council is required by the Education Act 1996 to ensure that pupils who have been permanently excluded are in receipt of an appropriate education after fifteen days. If an alternative mainstream school is not appropriate then it becomes necessary to arrange a placement in either an out of county special school or our SEBD (social, emotional and behaviour difficulties) school. There are of course significant cost implications with placing a pupil out of county. In terms of in county placement, which is always the preferred option, tuition costs may be incurred whilst placement is being facilitated.

5.1.1 There are no budgetary implications in terms of fixed term exclusions although we know schools make provision to meet pupil need from within their own budgets to avoid or reduce the likelihood of fixed term exclusions.



## 5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

5.2.1 There is an ongoing need to minimise exclusions so that pupils are attending school on a regular basis and are able to maximise their potential.

5.2.2 Failure to ensure that there is robust monitoring of exclusions in schools and of the quality of Council services to support school improvement carries with it a number of significant risks:

- Undetected and unaddressed decline in school performance and the quality of provision
- Students do not achieve to acceptable levels
- Lack of overall improvement in schools' performance
- Negative impact on the reputation of the Council

5.2.3 Similarly, ineffective monitoring of Council Services also poses a range of risks including:

- Reducing standards and quality of provision in schools
- Poor value for money
- Ineffective support for schools which hinders their improvement
- Negative impact on the reputation of the Council

## 5.3 ***Legal***

There are no legal implications for this report.

## 5.4 ***Human Resources***

There are no human resources implications arising from this report.

## 6. **Supporting Evidence**

### 6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

#### 6.1.1 **The National Picture**

Welsh Government no longer publish Council comparison exclusion data. However, the Welsh Government continues to publish aggregated data. The last data published, in October 2019, reported on national 2017/18 data.

This shows that between 2013/14 and 2017/18:

- fixed term exclusions of 5 days or less have increased by 38%
- fixed term exclusions of over 5 days have increased by 9%.
- permanent exclusions have increased by 95%.

6.1.2 All Wales data is set out in the table below.

	Exclusions 5 days or less	Exclusions 6 days or more	Permanent Exclusions
2013/14	12,375	738	89
2014/15	13,914	805	89
2015/16	14,424	654	109
2016/17	16,044	863	165
2017/18	17,146	806	174

At the last point that comparative Council data was available, Blaenau Gwent was 13/22 for rates of 5 day exclusions or less, 4/5 in our family of LAs and 2/5 in South East Wales Consortia (SEWC). For rate of 6 days or more we were joint 6/22, 2/5 in our family of LAs and 2/5 in SEWC.

In terms of national reasons for exclusion, the main reasons have remained largely unchanged over the last five years with the top three being:

- persistent disruptive behaviour
- verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against an adult
- physical assault on a pupil

### 6.1.3 The Local Picture

The table below sets out Blaenau Gwent exclusion data for the last five years.

#### 6.1.4 Number of Exclusions:

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
<b>KS3 &amp; KS4</b>	<b>408</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>443</b>	<b>564</b>	<b>474</b>
5 days or less	394	305	439	546	460
6 days or more	14	8	4	18	14
<b>FP &amp; KS2</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>133</b>
5 days or less	41	36	74	61	132
6 days or more	2	1	6	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>451</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>523</b>	<b>625</b>	<b>607</b>

#### 6.1.5 Number of Days:

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
<b>KS3 &amp; KS4</b>	<b>781.5</b>	<b>525</b>	<b>742.5</b>	<b>872</b>	<b>762</b>
5 days or less	669.5	457	705.5	766.5	628
6 days or more	112	68	37	105.5	134
<b>FP &amp; KS2</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>188.5</b>	<b>84.5</b>	<b>225</b>
5 days or less	78	61	139.5	84.5	211.5
6 days or more	19	7	49	0	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>878.5</b>	<b>593</b>	<b>931</b>	<b>956.5</b>	<b>987</b>

Overall we have seen a decrease in exclusions in 2018/19 compared to the previous year, particularly in KS3/4. However, there has been a small increase in the number of days lost to exclusion.

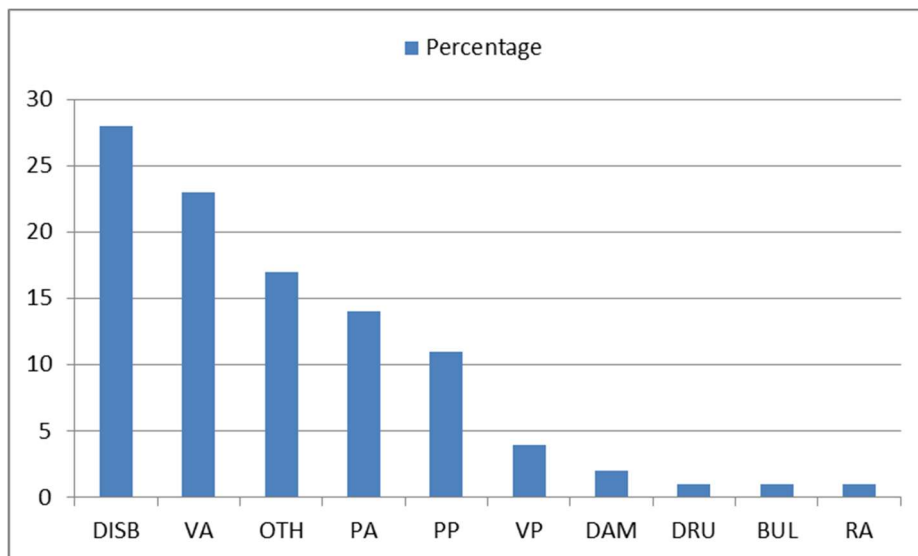
KS3/4 data shows a 19% reduction in the number of exclusions in 2018/19 compared to the previous year and a 12.6% reduction in the number of days lost.

Foundation Phase (FP)/KS2 data shows an increase in incidents of exclusion as well as a commensurate increase in the number of days lost.

Data at FP/KS2 shows that a small number of schools account for 66% of exclusions and in those schools a significant proportion of the total relate to a small number of pupils (11). Further analysis of this data cannot be represented due to the potential for individual pupil identification.

### 6.1.6 Percentage of All Incidents by Reason

Below are the Blaenau Gwent percentages for reasons given by schools for exclusion. Schools are able to use more than one reason but the data below represents the main reason given by schools.

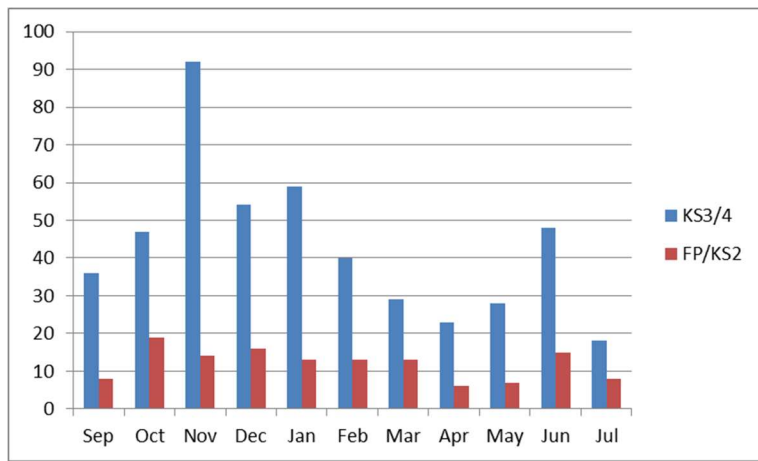


KEY	
DISB	- Persistent disruptive behaviour
VA	- Verbal abuse / threatening behaviour against an adult
OTH	- Other
PA	- Physical assault against adult
PP	- Physical Assault against pupil
VP	- Verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against a pupil
DAM	- Damage
DRU	- Drugs/Alcohol
BUL	- Bullying

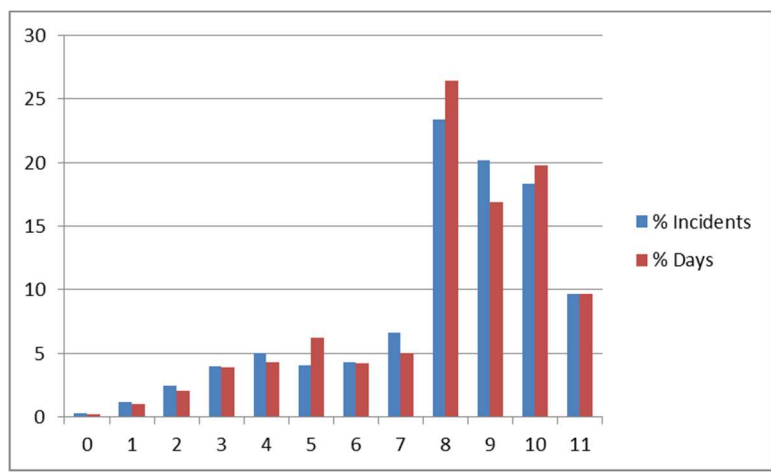
In terms of reasons for exclusion, the main reasons have remained largely unchanged and in line with national trends:

- persistent disruptive behaviour
- verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against an adult
- physical assault on a pupil

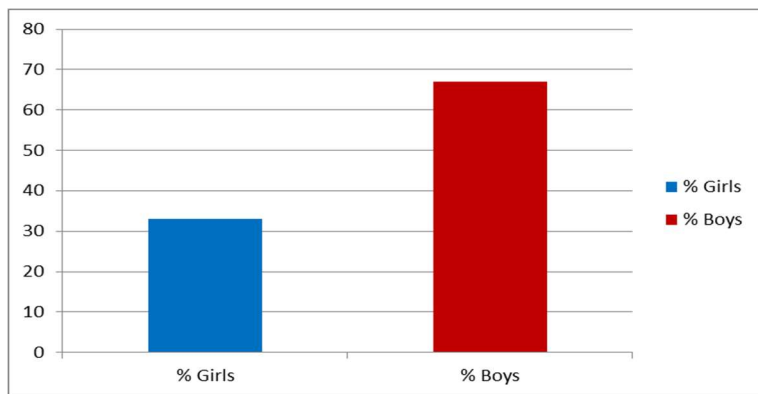
**6.1.7 Exclusions by Month**



**6.1.8 Exclusions by Year Group as a percentage**



**6.1.9 Percentage of Exclusions – Boys/Girls**



#### 6.1.10 **Permanent Exclusions**

It should be noted that because of the limited number of pupils care needs to be taken when drawing any statistical conclusions and due to the limited number further statistical breakdown is not possible.

There were a total of three permanent exclusions in 2018/19 compared to nine in 2017/18 and 12 in 2016/17. Of these all were in KS3/4.

#### 6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

Knowing that the Council is working to ensure that the use of exclusions is appropriate and proportionate and that work with schools is ongoing to share good practice to see a reduction in the use of exclusions should provide a level of reassurance to the public.

#### 6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

Work is ongoing with a range of partners (other South East Wales Councils, the EAS as well as Health and Social Services) to ensure that we are doing all we can in to minimise the use of exclusion.

#### 6.4 ***Thinking for the long term (forward planning)***

Exclusions, and the use of exclusions, fit within the wider context of education including curriculum change, the focus on wellbeing as well as school to school and regional working.

We know that there is expertise in our schools and we know that there are areas where further focus is required. We are working closely with schools and the EAS regarding a range of Inclusion issues including exclusions.

#### 6.5 ***Preventative focus***

Work is ongoing to ensure that the use of exclusions is appropriate and proportionate, that support and challenge is provided as required, that learning from other regional partners is maximised, that appropriate processes are followed and that schools are benefiting from good practice within Blaenau Gwent and further afield.

#### 6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

Education works closely with Health and Social Services, with the EAS and with other regional Councils. Where alignment and further collaboration is possible these are being pursued.

#### 6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***

Education are working with other agencies and services, taking a multi-service, multi-agency and regional approach.

#### 6.8 ***EqIA (screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed)***

There are no adverse impacts in relation to this.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 Suitable monitoring is in place. Exclusions are monitored fortnightly with appropriate challenge and support provided to schools as necessary. Exclusions are also reported to DMT, the Inclusion Monitoring group and Wider group in terms of the involvement of the EAS.

8. **Background Documents / Electronic Links**

N/A

REF: PE.201

# Agenda Item 8

*Executive Committee and Council only*

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer:

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer:

Committee: **Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **15<sup>th</sup> January 2020**

Report Subject: **21st Century Schools Programme - Gateway Review**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Joanne Collins, Executive Member for Education**

Report Submitted by: **Lynn Phillips, Head of Education Transformation**

Reporting Pathway (Dates to be Entered)								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
✓	05.11.19	20.12.19			15.01.20	29.01.20		

1. **Purpose of the Report**
  - 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide an opportunity for Members to scrutinise the 21st Century Schools Programme, particularly the outcome of the Welsh Government facilitated Gateway Review (September 2019).
2. **Scope and Background**
  - 2.1 The Welsh Government has an expectation that each Council participates in the Gateway Review process, as part of the 21st Century Schools Programme. The Gateway Review process is a form of peer support, which tests the Council's readiness and capacity to deliver against the programme.
  - 2.2 The Council originally participated in a Gateway Review in October 2013, which highlighted a delivery confidence assessment of Amber. The initial Gateway Review was followed-up by a further review in November 2014 and that review found that the Council had continued to make sound progress, and therefore, was awarded a delivery confidence assessment of Amber/Green. The second Gateway Review report's key recommendation identified that there was a need to adopt a formal approach to 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools programme management arrangements and embed the methods and techniques to secure wider benefits for the Council.
  - 2.3 The Education Directorate invited Welsh Government to undertake a third Gateway Review during July 2017 and the final report identified that the delivery confidence assessment for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Band A Programme was Green/Amber.
  - 2.4 Most recently, the Council has invited the WG to facilitate the fourth Gateway Review that took place during September 2019. The Education Transformation team agreed with the review team that, due to the programme construct, the delivery confidence assessment for the current status of Blaenau Gwent's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Programme, should be split into two separate assessments for Band A and Band B respectively.

- 2.5 For Band A, based upon a Gateway 5, the review team considered that the delivery confidence assessment is Green.
- 2.6 For Band B, based upon a Gateway 0, the review team considered that the delivery confidence assessment is Amber, due to being in the early stages of the tranche.
- 2.7 The review's full report is attached as Appendix 1 and the three recommendations are detailed below:

Ref. No.	Recommendation	Urgency (C/E/R)	Target date for completion	Classification
1.	The SRO should maintain management and team continuity from Band A into Band B.	C- Critical	24 <sup>th</sup> Dec 2019	10. Resource & Skills Management 10.2 Capacity Planning & Management
2.	Ensure a strong communications strategy to support delivery plans.	C- Critical	31 <sup>st</sup> Mar 2020	3. Programme and Project Management 3.6 Communications
3.	The SRO should continue to seek clarity on the revenue implications of a new Welsh Medium primary school in Blaenau Gwent.	E- Essential	31 <sup>st</sup> Oct 2019	1. Governance 1.3 Approvals

### 3. Options for Recommendation

The options for Scrutiny to consider are:

- 3.1 Option1: Members scrutinise the information detailed within the report, thereby contributing to the continuous self-evaluation of the service prior to making appropriate recommendations to the Executive Committee.
- 3.2 Option 2: Accept the report as provided.

### 4. Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan

- 4.1 Efficient Council – To develop a more commercial organisation to generate income and deliver cost reductions to make local services sustainable.
- 4.2 Education – To improve the quality of our education services and our school buildings to help learners achieve great outcomes and to continue to support school leaders to help our pupils achieve their ambitions.



## 5. Implications Against Each Option

### 5.1 ***Impact on Budget***

The Council's Band B programme will secure circa £25m capital funding, including the Welsh medium proposal for a range of new school buildings/improvements across the school estate. The Welsh Government's contribution is 65% of the total investment. The Council has continued to access WG capital funds for each project through the development and submission of business cases to Welsh Government based upon H.M. Treasury's five case business model.

### 5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

Raising educational standards is a strategic risk on the Corporate Risk Register (CRR). The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme proposals presented within this report will contribute to mitigating this risk. Moreover, there are very robust risk management arrangements in place for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme, with identified risks regularly reported to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Partnership Board via highlight reporting processes.

### 5.3 ***Legal***

There are no direct Legal implications associated with the Gateway Review.

### 5.4. ***Human Resources***

There are no direct staffing implications, however, in line with the Gateway Review findings there will be an additional post created in the Education Transformation team funded via the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools capital funding for the programme.

## 6. Supporting Evidence:

### 6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

The report highlights that the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools programme management arrangements are to be commended. The review team stated that:

'all of the projects within the Portfolio have been successfully completed, with the most recent project - Six Bells - handed over a few weeks ago. Ongoing monitoring and realisation of benefits is well-evidenced. The positive impact of these projects on education and wider societal outcomes in the Blaenau Gwent area is also clearly evidenced. The Education team (and the Council colleagues who have supported them) should be commended for their efforts in delivering Band A successfully. The very high quality of programme management in evidence is impressive'.

Performance will continue to be monitored closely, however, to ensure the full delivery of the Band B initiative.

6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme will contribute to raising educational standards across the board.

6.3 ***Involvement***

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme contributes to the strategic direction for the school estate across the County Borough. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Partnership Board has representation from across all services within the Council. There are also statutory requirements to involve stakeholders in school re-organisation proposals linked to the WG's School Organisation Code (2013).

6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term***

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme is a long-term programme that spans the period 2014 to 2034. The Band B element covers the period 2019 to 2025.

6.5 ***Preventative Focus***

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme will take a preventative approach to learners' needs and place an emphasis on delivering a school estate that is fit for purpose that contributes to raising educational standards, which is a Council priority.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

The Vision for Education is based upon a school led self-improving collaborative approach and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme will play a role in improving partnership arrangements with the schools and their respective communities e.g. the community focussed schools agenda.

6.7 ***Integration***

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme is a key element in responding to the Council's wellbeing goals for all learners, particularly learners with Additional Learning Needs.

6.8 ***EqlA***

All of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools projects are equality impact assessed.

7. ***Monitoring Arrangements***

The Council is committed to the provision of an improved school estate to support raising educational standards. The Gateway Review provides the Council with a high level of assurance that the delivery of the programme is on track. The report's findings also recognise the good progress that the Council has made in the delivery of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools initiative, including planning and preparedness for the Band B programme. The Gateway Review report is part of the Scrutiny/Executive forward work programme, therefore, the report is presented to Scrutiny Committee for discussion in the first instance.

**Background Documents / Electronic Links**

Appendix 1 - Gateway Review Report



## **OGC Gateway™ Review 5 - Operations review & Benefits Realisation & Review 0 Strategic assessment**

<b>Version number:</b>	FINAL 1.0
<b>Senior Responsible Owner (SRO):</b>	Lynn Phillips
<b>Date of issue to SRO:</b>	25 <sup>th</sup> September 2019 Final Version 1 <sup>st</sup> October 2019
<b>Project Title:</b>	Blaenau Gwent's 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme
<b>Department/Organisation of the Project</b>	<b>Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council</b> Education Transformation and Performance
<b>Review dates:</b>	23 <sup>rd</sup> to 25 <sup>th</sup> of September 2019
<b>Review Team Leader:</b>	Alex Porter
<b>Review Team Members:</b>	Robin Davis Sheila Powell
<b>Previous Review:</b>	Gateway 0 – Band A 17 <sup>th</sup> to 19 <sup>th</sup> of July 2017 Green Amber
<b>IAH ID number:</b>	AH/19/35

This assurance review was arranged and managed by:

Welsh Government Integrated Assurance Hub (IAH)  
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IAH helpdesk: [ppmdevelopmentunit@gov.wales](mailto:ppmdevelopmentunit@gov.wales)



## 1.0 Delivery Confidence Assessment (DCA)

<b><u>Delivery Confidence Assessment:</u></b>	For Band A - <b>GREEN</b> For Band B - <b>AMBER</b>
<p>The Review Team considers that, due to the programme construct, the Delivery Confidence Assessment for the current status of Blaenau Gwent’s 21<sup>st</sup> Century Programme, should be split into two separate assessments for Band A and Band B respectively.</p> <p>For Band A, based upon a Gateway 5, the Review Team considers that the Delivery Confidence Assessment is Green.</p> <p>For Band B, based upon a Gateway 0, the Review Team considers that the Delivery Confidence Assessment is Amber.</p> <p>For Band A, the Review Team found that all of the projects within the Portfolio have been successfully completed, with the most recent project - Six Bells - handed over a few weeks ago. Ongoing monitoring and realisation of benefits is well-evidenced. The positive impact of these projects on education and wider societal outcomes in the Blaenau Gwent area is also clearly evidenced. The Education team (and the Council colleagues who have supported them) should be commended for their efforts in delivering Band A successfully. The very high quality of programme management in evidence is impressive.</p> <p>For Band B, the Review Team found that whilst the vision and objectives of the programme are set out and a high degree of stakeholder ‘buy in’ already achieved, overall programme development is at an early stage. An initial list of projects within the Band B portfolio has been developed with the first project (Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg Remodelling) business case being developed. Other project business cases are being developed and will be put forward to the Welsh Government for consideration.</p> <p>The assessment of Amber reflects the current level of delivery confidence in the programme’s eventual <i>outcomes</i>. At this early stage there remain some unknowns; some risks have not been fully quantified; the final project list requires approval, and; there is uncertainty over some, specific aspects of funding which requires resolution.</p> <p>The Review Team are keen to note that the Band B programme already has some significant strengths on which to build. The Council has retained the existing Band</p>	

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**Operations Review & Benefits Realisation**  
**Project Title: AH/19/35**



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A team, funding requirements have been evaluated carefully and work is under way to drive forward the Band B programme. Clear evidence was seen of the commitment of the council's senior executive and the Welsh Government to the Band B programme.

In addition to Band B, the programme team are also managing a number of other projects that are interlinked with Band B. Focus does need to be maintained on delivering Band B with the right number of resources to successfully secure the outcomes.

**1.1 Delivery Confidence Assessment**

The Delivery Confidence assessment RAG status should use the definitions below:

RAG	Criteria Description
<b>Green</b>	Successful delivery of the project to time, cost and quality appears highly likely and there are no major outstanding issues that at this stage appear to threaten delivery.
<b>Amber/Green</b>	Successful delivery appears probable. However, constant attention will be needed to ensure risks do not materialise into major issues threatening delivery.
<b>Amber</b>	Successful delivery appears feasible but significant issues already exist requiring management attention. These appear resolvable at this stage and, if addressed promptly, should not present a cost/schedule overrun.
<b>Amber/Red</b>	Successful delivery of the project is in doubt with major risks or issues apparent in a number of key areas. Urgent action is needed to ensure these are addressed, and establish whether resolution is feasible.
<b>Red</b>	Successful delivery of the project appears to be unachievable. There are major issues which, at this stage, do not appear to be manageable or resolvable. The project may need re-baselining and/or overall viability re-assessed.

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This report is an evidence-based snapshot of the project's status at the time of the review. It reflects the views of the independent review team, based on information evaluated over the review period, and is delivered to the SRO immediately at the conclusion of the review.

## 2.0 Summary of Report Recommendations

The Review Team makes the following recommendations, which are prioritised using the definitions below:

Ref. No.	Recommendation	Urgency (C/E/R)	Target date for completion	Classification
1.	The SRO should maintain management and team continuity from Band A into Band B.	C- Critical	24 <sup>th</sup> Dec 2019	10. Resource & Skills Management 10.2 Capacity Planning & Management
2.	Ensure a strong communications strategy to support delivery plans.	C- Critical	31 <sup>st</sup> Mar 2020	3. Programme and Project Management 3.6 Communications
3.	The SRO should continue to seek clarity on the revenue implications of a new Welsh Medium primary school in Blaenau Gwent.	E- Essential	31 <sup>st</sup> Oct 2019	1. Governance 1.3 Approvals

**Critical (Do Now)** – To increase the likelihood of a successful outcome it is of the greatest importance that the programme should take action immediately.

**Essential (Do By)** – To increase the likelihood of a successful outcome the programme/ project should take action in the near future.

**Recommended** – The programme should benefit from the uptake of this recommendation.



### **3.0 Comments from the SRO**

The SRO presented to the Review team in a pre-meeting and requested that the Gateway Review focused on the following:

- A 'Programme' focus;
- Assess Band A progress – with a focus on closure; and,
- Assess preparedness for Band B.

The Blaenau Gwent team are pleased with the outcomes of the Gateway Review and accept the associated recommendations. The Review has been a totally valuable and worthwhile experience that will contribute to driving forward further improvement across the Council's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme. The SRO would, therefore, like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the Gateway Review team for their professionalism and the balanced approach that was taken throughout the review.

Blaenau Gwent's Education Transformation team will use the report's recommendations to produce a detailed action plan to cover the initial stages of the Band B Programme.



## **4.0 Background**

### **The aims of the Programme:**

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (“the Council”) is committed to providing all children and young people with education and training, tailored to meet their needs, which will develop their potential, promote social inclusion and contribute to the economic regeneration of the area. Whilst progress has been made, there is a long way to go to improve outcomes for young people in relation to the ‘All Wales’ educational attainment and achievement levels. A fundamental review of the existing school estate is an essential component to transform education across the Authority. The vision is to improve pupil attainment and achievement levels through the transformation of schools and learning to meet modern 21<sup>st</sup> Century School standards.

### **The driving force for the Programme:**

Improving standards pupil outcomes and wellbeing in Education is a Council priority. On many measures, current performance is above expected levels against similar Local Authorities and, in fact, in some measures Blaenau Gwent is performing significantly above expectations. However, the Council’s ambition is to exceed the all-Wales means in every measure going forward in line with National Reform, which includes the new measures currently going through a transition period.

### **The procurement/delivery status:**

The Programme has multiple projects, delivered over successive tranches known as ‘Bands’. ‘Band A’ both refurbished existing school sites and delivered entirely new learning environments, with complementary transformative changes to school governance and leadership. This is substantially complete, following the opening to pupils in September 2019 of the final project, the Six Bells school site, a key component of the wider Abertillery Learning Community.

‘Band B’ encompasses the remodelling of Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg, Blaenau Gwent’s sole existing Welsh Medium primary school; the remodelling of three existing secondary schools, and; the development of a new primary school, Glyncloed, in the Ebbw Vale locality. Band B is at an early stage. The Review Team found that activity was under way across multiple projects to, variously, secure Business Case sign-off, initiate Consultation exercises and conduct maintenance, condition and suitability assessments.





It should be noted that in addition to the projects formally in scope for Band A and Band B the Blaenau Gwent Education team seeks to deliver a number of further projects. Most of these are not in scope for this Review. However, a project to deliver a new Welsh Medium primary school in the Tredegar Valley, funded principally through a capital grant from the Welsh Government, is being managed as a *de facto* part of Band B and has therefore been considered by the Review team.

### **Current position regarding OGC Gateway™ Reviews:**

This is the fourth Gateway Review of the Programme. The previous review (Gateway 0) was undertaken in July 2017. All recommendations from this previous Review have been completed.

A summary of recommendations, progress and status from the previous assurance review can be found in **Annex C**.

## **5.0 Purposes and conduct of the OGC Gateway Review**

The primary purposes of an OGC Gateway Review 5: ‘Operations Review & Benefits Realisation’ are to assess whether the anticipated benefits are being delivered and confirm that the ongoing contractual arrangements meet the business need.

The primary purposes of a Gateway Review 0: ‘Strategic Assessment’ are to review the outcomes and objectives for the programme (and the way they fit together) and confirm that they make the necessary contribution to Ministers’ or the departments’ overall strategy.

Annex A gives the full purposes statement for an OGC Gateway Review 5 and an OGC Gateway Review 0.

Annex B lists the people who were interviewed during the review.

## **6.0 Acknowledgement**

The Review Team would like to thank Lynn Phillips, Senior Responsible Owner (SRO), the Programme Team and all stakeholders who attended interviews for their support and openness, which contributed to the Review Team’s understanding of the Programme and the outcome of this Review. Particular thanks go to Sharon Northall for managing the logistics for the Review and coordinating the interview process, and



to Stefan Roberts, specialist English-Welsh translator, who stepped in at short notice to support the Review Team in ensuring successful interviews for all stakeholders.

## **7.0 Scope of the Review**

Against the background set out above, the scope of the review is two-fold. For Band A, a Gateway 5 - review of operating phase - was undertaken. For Band B, a Gate 0 – ongoing strategic assessment - was undertaken.

## **8.0 Review Team findings and recommendations**

### **8.1: Gate 5: Review of operating phase**

The Review Team found that, following the recent opening of the Six Bells site, all Band A projects are now complete and operating as planned. Band A represents a major achievement in the delivery of sometimes complex infrastructure projects. The Review Team considers that this is the outcome of a successful partnership between the Council, the Schools, the Welsh Government and appointed contractors, in which all parties have invested early and consistently. The Review Team commends the programme team for their enthusiasm, commitment and professionalism in delivery a challenging Band A programme.

The strength of the partnerships between the Council and other stakeholders allowed the programme team to manage potentially disruptive issues effectively, minimising the impact on outcomes for pupils and families. This was particularly well-evidenced at the Six Bells site, where the Council, Welsh Government and Morgan Sindall worked together in a way characterised by professional diligence, open communication and financial flexibility to overcome the late discovery of a sewerage main across the planned school footprint (not shown on incorrect, dated Welsh Water plans). An additional £1.5M of required funding was secured through discussion between the Council and Welsh Government; the Morgan Sindall team delivered viable alternative designs rapidly, and – critically – strong communication with community representatives was maintained throughout. As a result, Six Bells opened to pupils, as planned, at the start of the Autumn term 2019.

While Band A has had a large infrastructure component, the Council is clear that building and refurbishment work are *enablers* to improved learning and wider



outcomes for the young people of Blaenau Gwent, and the community of which they are part.

## **8.2: Gate 5: Business Case and benefits management**

Prior to delivery of each of the projects, a business case with clearly identified benefits was submitted for approval to the Council executive and Welsh Government. The result of this was appropriate funding being secured for projects to commence.

A clear approach to benefits realisation and management was articulated for each project, and managed coherently at a programme and corporate level. With delivery of all of the projects in the Band A portfolio now completed, the Review Team have found that benefits realisation, ensuring Value for Money and continued monitoring of benefits is at the core of the Council's and programme team's scrutiny, with regular meetings and reports conducted.

Closure reports for each of the projects have been produced, with the exception of Six Bells Primary, which has only recently been occupied. This report is the only one left to produce. Each closure report contains statements on benefits achieved and the programme team are collating ongoing benefits realised through delivery of the projects. The Review Team found that the delivery of community benefits has been at the heart of the programme and the subsequent projects delivered.

## **8.3: Gate 5: Plans for ongoing improvements in value for money, performance and innovation**

The programme team is well-versed not just in monitoring benefits but in consistently reviewing activity and seeking opportunities for improvement. The Education team lead co-ordinates the South East Wales Education Group to share best practice and regularly works with Welsh Government to pilot new initiatives and attend all-Wales Education fora.

As a Council under austerity, the focus is very much on delivering Value for Money and using innovative measures in projects and making improvements to do so. It is clear to the Review Team that this approach underpins everything the Council undertakes and that this will continue into the Band B projects. Quite simply, if a project was forecast not to meet the strategic objectives, not to deliver value for money or not to secure expected benefits, this experienced programme team would not take it forward.



For each of the projects delivered in Band A, governance and monitoring is in place for continued improvements to be made. The Council has transitioned ownership of continuous improvement to local school leadership teams, who are proactive in generating ideas for future utilisation and improvement.

#### **8.4: Gate 0: Policy and business context**

The Vision for Education puts schools at the centre of the improvement plans, setting ambitious plans for an outward-looking, self-improving system, building a joint, shared vision, core values and principles. The successful delivery of Band A projects provides valuable lessons learnt to support Band B delivery.

The Education team demonstrate a strong commitment to the programme and clear understanding of the task ahead. They have developed consultation plans to focus on the delivery of the Welsh Medium provision, which whilst outside the formal scope of Band B is a key aspect of the Vision for Education. To support this, the team have already built strong links with the key stakeholder groups.

In terms of the proposed secondary school remodelling proposals, the team are liaising with Head Teachers, many of whom are new to their schools. Their focus is to understand the school vision and identify how best to allocate the resources available to provide solutions which will meet the school aspirations within available budgets.

The current programme team have been integral to the success of Band A. The Review Team note that the programme team is continuing into Band B and judge that this will help to set Band B for success.

The Review Team support the planned creation of a new post to supplement existing programme team resources, in recognition of the multiple, interlinking programmes and projects which are supporting the wider improvements in education delivery.

**Recommendation - The SRO should maintain management and team continuity from Band A into Band B.**

#### **8.5: Gate 0: Business Case and stakeholders**



The Council is at an early stage in the Band B programme, having identified a range of projects within the allocated budget forecast of £19.6m. These include a new build primary, Glyncoed, in the Ebbw Vale area and remodelling of Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg and the three secondary schools. The provision of a Welsh Medium primary school, which as noted above is not within the Band B programme but clearly impacts Band B plans as it will be managed by the same team, will be delivered through a full capital cost grant of circa £6m from Welsh Government.

The Council has not yet developed any detailed business cases to identify the project specifics. The Education team have, however, identified the key stakeholders and are building relationships to ensure that the solutions will have the necessary support and deliver to the aspirations of the individual schools.

It is important to also recognise the importance of community engagement to build trust and overcome potential barriers. Communications plans must include both the schools and the wider communities they support in order to maximise the benefits of the proposed investments.

**Recommendation - Ensure a strong communications strategy to support delivery plans.**

#### **8.6: Gate 0: Readiness for the next phase**

The Council has a clear strategic vision for Band B, has identified several projects and has secured capital funding to support delivery of all projects formally in scope. The Council has an effective delivery team, who have demonstrated their capability to deliver through the Band A programme and to improve for the future using lessons learned from the Band A projects.

The Council has recently issued a statement about the revenue implications of the new Welsh Medium primary school provision and is working to clarify the situation with Welsh Government and other stakeholders. The Review Team note that such revenue challenges are not unique to Blaenau Gwent and have been experienced by other local authorities.

**Recommendation – The SRO should continue to seek clarity on the revenue implications of a new Welsh Medium primary school in Blaenau Gwent.**

## **9.0 Next Assurance Review**

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It is recommended that a further Gate 0 on projects in scope for Band B (including any projects managed de facto as part of Band B) be scheduled in Spring term 2021, by which time near-term projects should be substantially advanced and uncertainty removed from longer-term projects.

## **ANNEX A**

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**Purposes of OGC Gateway™ Review 5: Operations review & benefits realisation**

- Assess whether the Business Case justification for the project at OGC Gateway Review 3: Investment decision was realistic.
- Confirm that there is still a business need for the investment
- Assess whether the benefits anticipated at this stage are actually being delivered.
- Assess the effectiveness of the ongoing contract management processes.
- Confirm that the client side continues to have the necessary resources to manage the contract successfully.
- Confirm continuity of key personnel involved in contract management/'intelligent customer' roles.
- Where changes have been agreed, check that they do not compromise the original delivery strategy.
- Assess the ongoing requirement for the contract to meet business need. Ensure that if circumstances have changed, the service delivery and contract are adapting to the new situation. Changing circumstances could affect: partner management; relationship management; service management; change management; contract management; benefits management; performance management.
- Check that there is ongoing contract development to improve value for money.
- Confirm that there are plans to manage the contract to its conclusion.
- Where applicable, confirm the validity of exit strategy and arrangements for re-competition.

**Purposes of the OGC Gateway Review 0: Strategic assessment:**



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- Review the outcomes and objectives for the programme (and the way they fit together) and confirm that they make the necessary contribution to overall strategy of the organisation and its senior management.
- Ensure that the programme is supported by key stakeholders.
- Confirm that the programme's potential to succeed has been considered in the wider context of Government policy and procurement objectives, the organisation's delivery plans and change programmes, and any interdependencies with other programmes or projects in the organisation's portfolio and, where relevant, those of other organisations.
- Review the arrangements for leading, managing and monitoring the programme as a whole and the links to individual parts of it (e.g. to any existing projects in the programme's portfolio).
- Review the arrangements for identifying and managing the main programme risks (and the individual project risks), including external risks such as changing business priorities.
- Check that provision for financial and other resources has been made for the programme (initially identified at programme initiation and committed later) and that plans for the work to be done through to the next stage are realistic, properly resourced with sufficient people of appropriate experience, and authorised.
- After the initial Review, check progress against plans and the expected achievement of outcomes.
- Check that there is engagement with the market as appropriate on the feasibility of achieving the required outcome.
- Where relevant, check that the programme takes account of joining up with other programmes, internal and external.
- Evaluation of actions to implement recommendations made in any earlier assessment of deliverability.

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## ANNEX B

### List of Interviewees

The following stakeholders were interviewed during the review:

#### Interviewees:

Name	Organisation and role
Lynn Phillips	Head of Education Transformation and Performance / SRO
Lynette Jones	Corporate Director for Education
Claire Gardner	Education Transformation Manager / Programme Manager
Joanne Watts	Principal Capital Accountant
Martin Woodland	BGCBC Solicitor Commercial Services Programme Board Number
Ann Toghil	Head teacher, Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg
Cath Barnard	Shared Resource Services Education Service Manager
Michael Pyatt	Morgan Sindall – Project manager Six Bells
Sharon Northall	21 <sup>st</sup> Century Schools Officer / Business Change Manager
Mike Price	Property Services Manager
Councillor Joanne Collins	Executive Member for Education
Dave Robinson	Architectural Projects Manager
Marie Lewis	ALC Former Head of Campus Queen Street and Bryngwyn Road
Louisa Tudge	ALC Former Head of Campus Queen Street and Bryngwyn Road
Kathryn Massey	Head of Capital Funding, Education and Public Services, Welsh Government



## ANNEX C

**Progress against previous assurance review (17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> of July 2017) recommendations:**

Recommendation	Progress/Status
The SRO is to engage with the Welsh Government to confirm the re-profiling of finances.	Completed: approval letter received from Welsh Government. Further re-profiling was undertaken successfully over 2018/19.
Review and update the risk register to include action owners and target closure dates and update the issue register with issue owners and target resolution date.	Termly Programme Risk Workshops have taken place throughout 2018/19, along with bi-monthly risk reviews.
The SRO is to ensure that cost control is maintained and value engineering is carried out where required.	Programme spend is monitored on a monthly basis. £150,000 additional funding was secured by a variation request, to address cost pressures on the Six Bells contract, in line with inflationary costs of materials, which impacted upon the value engineering target.
The SRO is to take measures to secure programme staff and maintain management continuity between Band A and a future Band B programme.	Existing staff have been secured, and approval has been granted by Education Department Management Team (DMT), to secure an additional member of staff in line with Project Management.

# Agenda Item 9

*Executive Committee and Council only*

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: N/A

Committee: **Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **15<sup>th</sup> January 2020**

Report Subject: **Education Workforce Sickness Absence Performance**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor J Collins, Executive Member Education**

Report Submitted by: **Andrea J Prosser, Head of Organisational Development**  
**Lynette Jones, Corporate Director Education**

Reporting Pathway								
DMT	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
	17.12.19	20.12.19			15.01.20			

## 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Elected Members of specific scrutiny committees the opportunity to scrutinise and challenge relevant Directorate sickness absence performance and the proposed actions for improvement.

## 2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 Staff attendance is critical in delivering services and the Council's priorities and is a key performance indicator reflected in the quarterly Finance and Performance report. Improving attendance remains a key priority for the Council and is linked to the need to create efficiencies and improve service delivery.
- 2.2 Sickness absence within the Authority is identified as a key risk and it is acknowledged that high levels of sickness absence will have a detrimental impact on the ability of the Council to deliver services effectively. Therefore, the need to reduce the impact and cost of sickness absence has been identified as a corporate priority.

## 3 Performance Information

- 3.1 The overall year end outturn figure for 2018/19 the Council was 12.66 days per full time equivalent (FTE) employee. An increase from the previous year's outturn of 11.2 days and exceeds the target set of 8.5 days.
- 3.2 Whilst sickness levels remain high it is important to note that the majority of employees have little or no sickness absence and attend work regularly. The vast majority of Council employees have excellent attendance levels as data indicates that 2463 employees attended work every day during the period from April 2018 to March 2019 with the Council having an attendance level of 94.3%.

3.3 A report reviewing workforce Sickness Absence Performance for the Council went to the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee on the 19<sup>th</sup> November 2019. The Scrutiny Committee supported the recommendations for improvement and also recommend the following; that processes be put in place for individual Directorates to report quarterly to their specific scrutiny committees for challenge and scrutiny on Directorate's sickness absence performance; and that the Executive Committee also have the opportunity to review this report.

3.4 **Appendix 1** outlines the sickness performance information for the Education Directorate (including schools) for quarter 1 and 2 of 2019/20 as well as summarising the position in 2018/19.

#### 4. **Directorate Comments/Actions for Improvement**

4.1 The data report is extremely helpful and is used diagnostically to ensure support is targeted well, particularly for cases of longer-term sickness absence in specific schools.

4.2 The Education Directorate undertakes regular weekly meetings with OD, finance, school improvement and officers from the legal department to ensure support is timely, appropriate and the relevant Council Policy is fully implemented.

4.3 Careful and effective management of longer-term sickness absence is of paramount importance to staff wellbeing and school effectiveness as a whole, which is why dedicated time is allocated to the careful and sensitive management of these cases.

4.4 Additionally, the Organisational Development division have provided Attendance Management Training as part of the Induction Process for Headteachers in October 2019 and HR Business Partners meet with all Headteachers annually during the Autumn Term to conduct annual workforce meetings, wherein sickness data is presented and discussed as part of these meetings.

4.5 Sickness performance data is also discussed at Strategic Headteachers Meetings.

#### **Actions**

4.6 The OD Team to provide bespoke Attendance Management Training as requested.

4.7 A working group to be created with a selection of Headteachers to review the current Attendance Management Policy.

4.8 The Education Directorate to continue to work with partners, as aforementioned, to effectively progress specific cases

5. **Options for Recommendation**
- 5.1 **Option 1**  
That the Scrutiny Committee having scrutinised the sickness absence performance information and proposed arrangements to improve attendance rates within the Education Directorate identify any further areas for improvement in order to drive forward performance improvement.
- 5.2 **Option 2**  
That the Scrutiny Committee endorse the report and proposed arrangements to support the improvement in attendance.
6. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**
- 6.1 ***Impact on Budget*** (short and long term impact)  
There are direct and indirect costs of sickness absence which are a key driver in the Council's approach to effectively improve attendance at work.
- 6.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***  
The underperformance in relation to the high levels of sickness absence does present a significant risk in terms of the impact on front line service delivery and continuity through lost time and staffing changes. In addition, the financial implications associated with sickness absence directly impact on the Council's financial efficiency targets and the level of financial savings that the Council needs to achieve. Mitigating actions are detailed within the report.
- 6.3 ***Legal***  
There are no legal implications arising from this report.
- 6.4 ***Human Resources***  
The staffing implications are detailed within the content of the report.
7. **Supporting Evidence**
- 7.1 ***Performance Information and Data***  
The detailed performance evidence is detailed in appendix 1 as well as the actions taken to address the level of underperformance.
- 7.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***  
Information included within the report will provide opportunity for the public to scrutinise the Council's performance and provide accountability across the Council.
- 7.3 ***Involvement*** (consultation, engagement, participation)  
Trade Union have been consulted on the sickness absence performance and are committed to working with the Council to improve attendance.

- 7.4 **Thinking for the Long term** (forward planning)  
Options detailed in this report contribute directly to enabling the workforce for the future.
- 7.5 **Preventative focus**  
The review of the Organisational Development Strategy will focus on prevention.
- 7.6 **Collaboration / partnership working**  
There are regular discussions with the national Human Resources Directors Network and regionally in terms of good practice or emerging practice in reducing sickness absence. There are early discussions with the WLGA to launch a project to learn from England any initiatives in relation to wellbeing.
- 7.7 **Integration** (across service areas)  
NA
- 7.8 **EqIA** (screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed)  
The review of sickness absence performance was carried out and included all employees of the Council.

## 8. **Monitoring Arrangements**

- 8.1 Sickness absence statistics are reported to the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) and Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis and an annual performance report is presented to Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee. Directorate positions and actions for improvement will be reported to specific scrutiny committees. Biannual workforce profiles are discussed with Managers and Headteachers.

### **Background Documents /Electronic Links**

Appendix 1 – Sickness Absence Monitoring – Quarters 1 and 2

## Sickness Absence 2019/20 (Quarter 1 & 2) – Education

Corporate Director – Lynette Jones

Head of Education Transformation – Lynn Phillips

Head of School Improvement & Inclusion – Gavin Metheringham

### Total Days lost per FTE Employee (Annual Council Target 11 days per FTE Employee)

2019/20	Qtr1 (Target 2.75)	Qtr2 (Target 5.50)
Council	3.06	5.93
Corporate Services	1.71	4.34
Social Services	3.62	7.45
Regeneration & Community Services	3.78	7.09

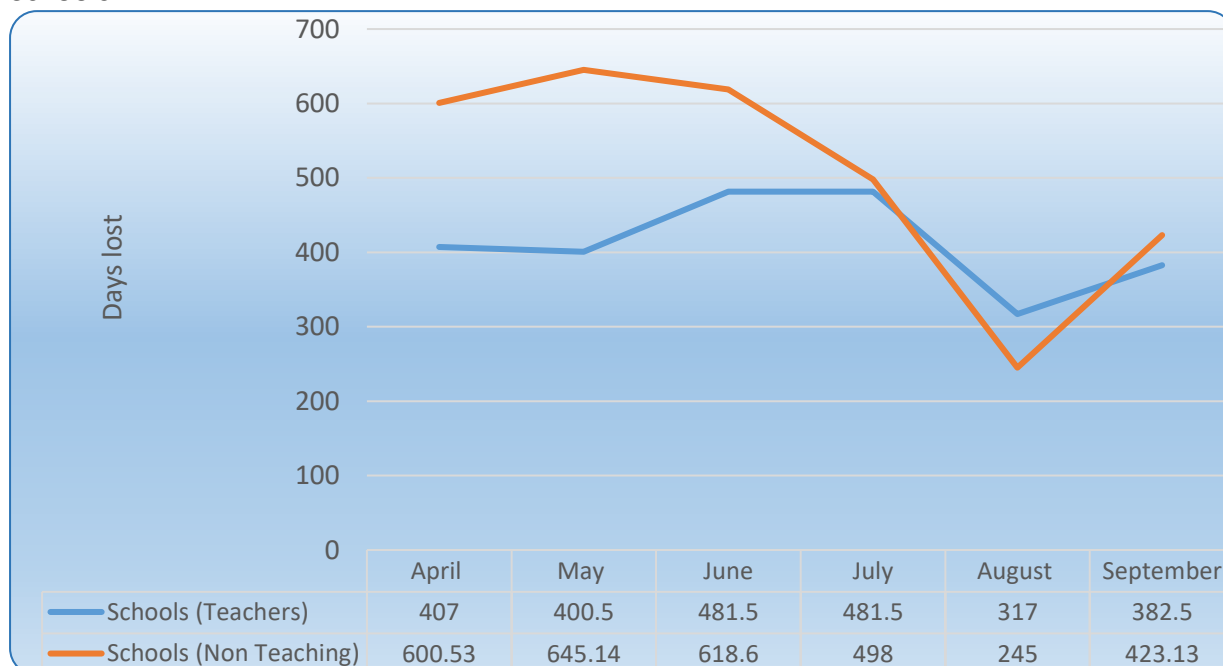
2019/20	Qtr1 (Target 2.75)	Qtr2 (Target 5.50)
Education (excluding Schools)	2.49	3.39
Education Transformation	2.97	4.36
School Improvement & Inclusion	1.84	1.84
Senior Management	0.00	0.00
Education (including Schools)	2.84	5.09
School based staff (Excluding Teachers)	3.18	5.36
Teachers	2.59	5.03
Schools Total	2.86	5.18

- 2018/19 – Annual Review Education
- 11.14 FTE days lost ( Quarter 1 - 2.79, Quarter 2 – 4.86)
  - 62.07% of absences were long term
  - 149 employees with one or more absences - mental health
  - 10,551 calendar days lost - mental health
  - 26 employees with more than 6 calendar months sickness
  - 13 employees disciplined for sickness absence (8 Pen-y-Cwm School)

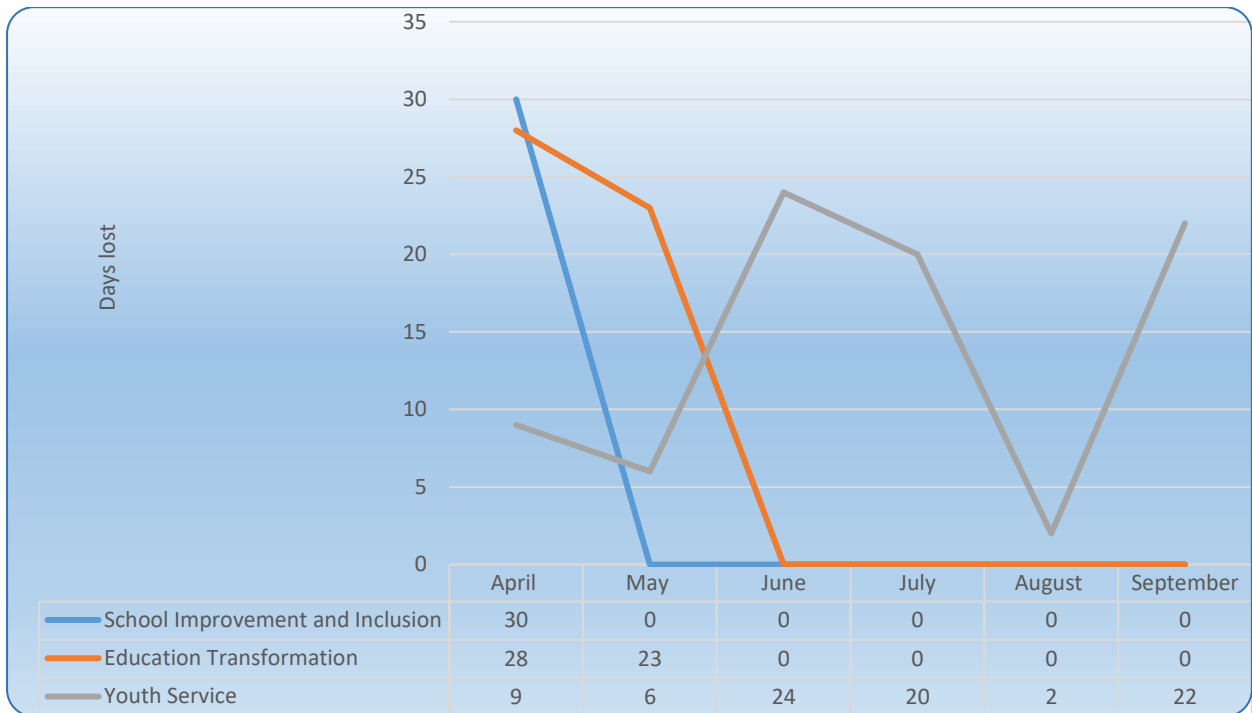
### Total Working Days Lost - 01.04.19 – 30.09.19

- 5664.4 working days lost to sickness absence ( 33,281.96 hours)

### Schools

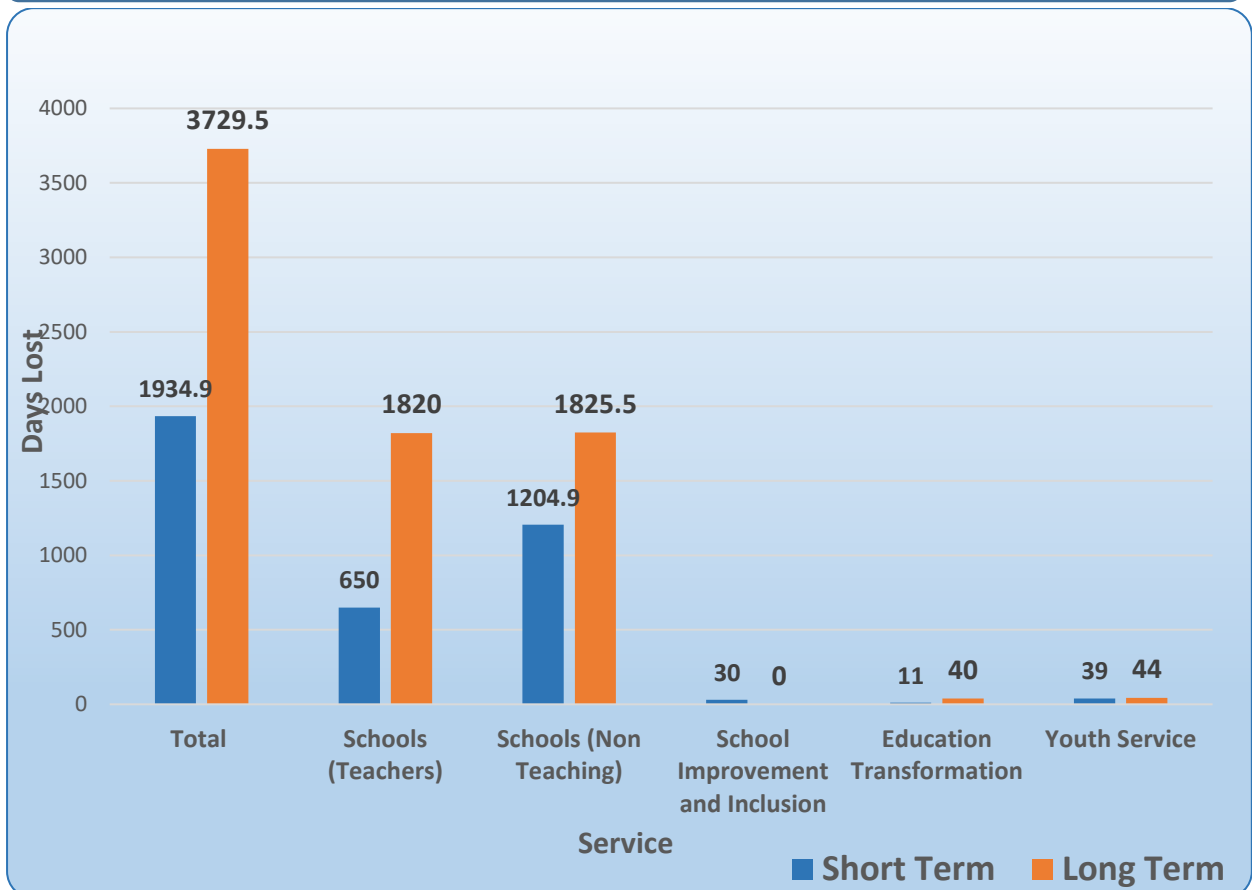


## Corporate



### Total Working Days Lost - Short Term / Long Term

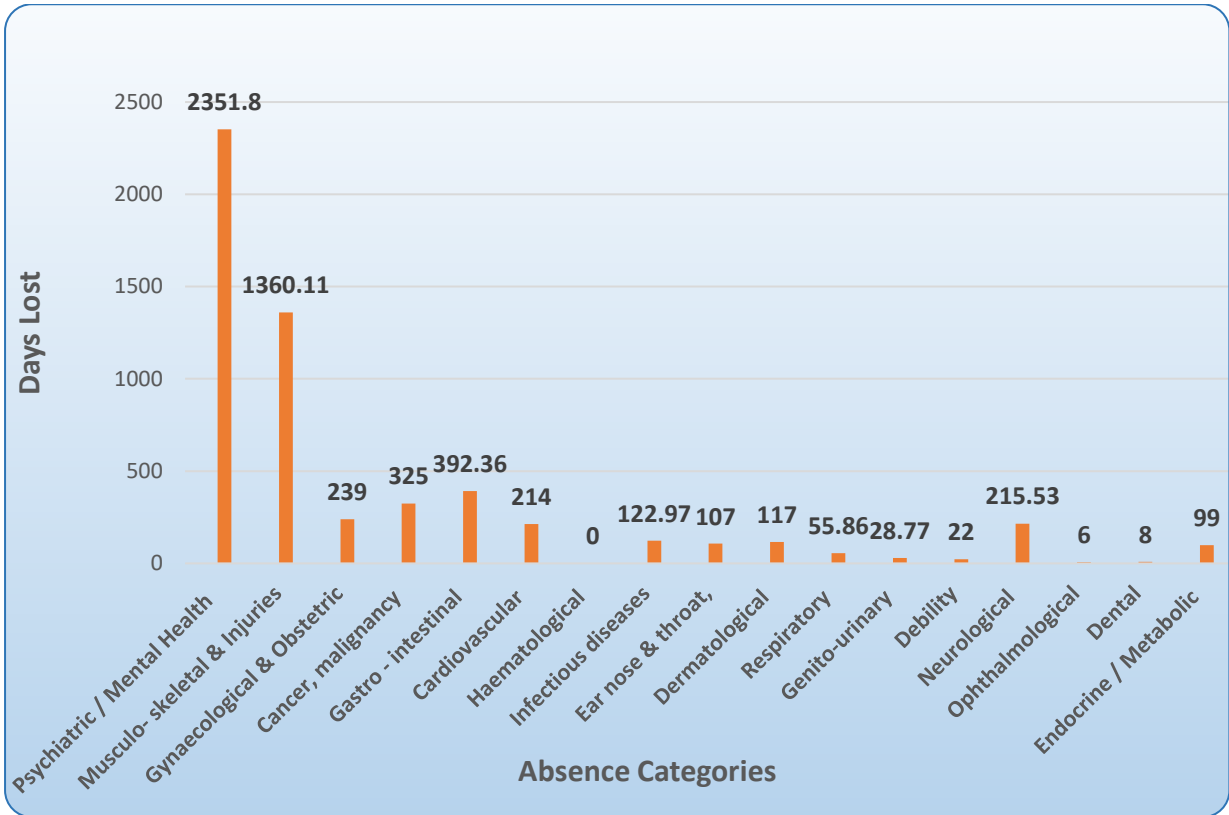
- 65.8% of absence is long term





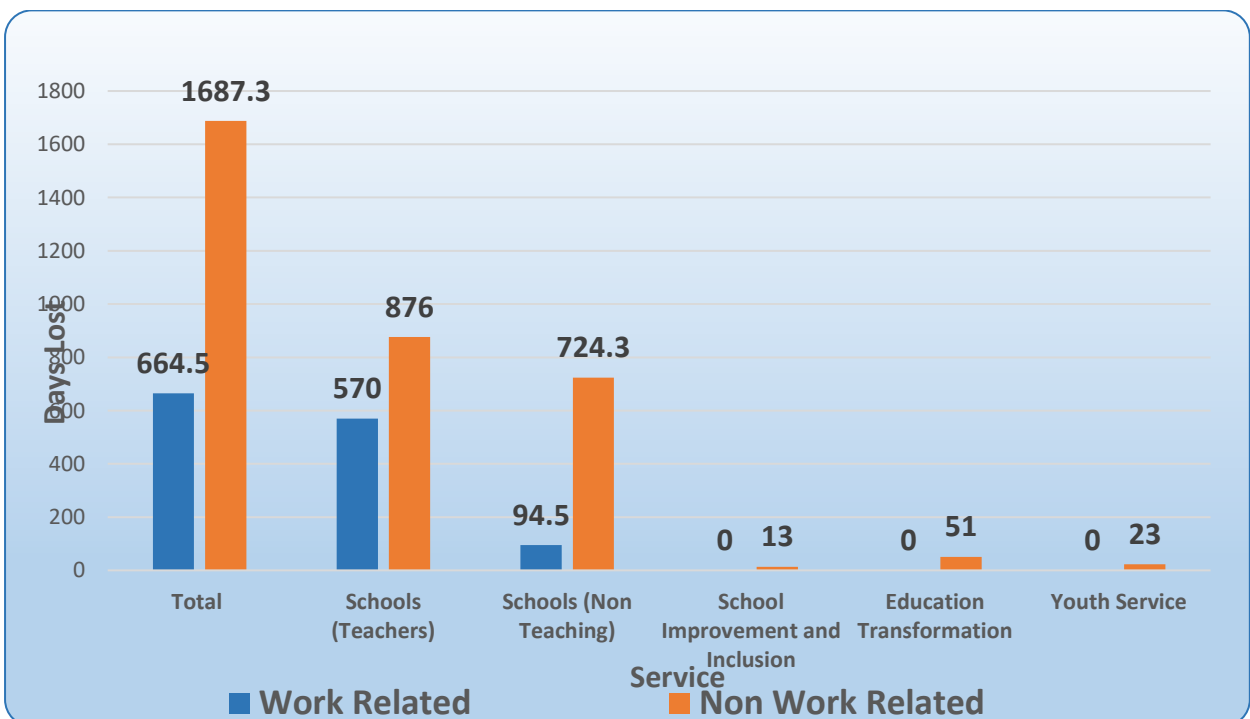
### Total Working Days Lost by Reason

- **Top 3** reasons – Psychiatric/Mental Health, Musculo-skeletal & injuries, Gynaecological
- **2351.8** working days lost to Psychiatric/Mental Health.



### Total Working Days lost Psychiatric / Mental Health (Work / Non Work Related)

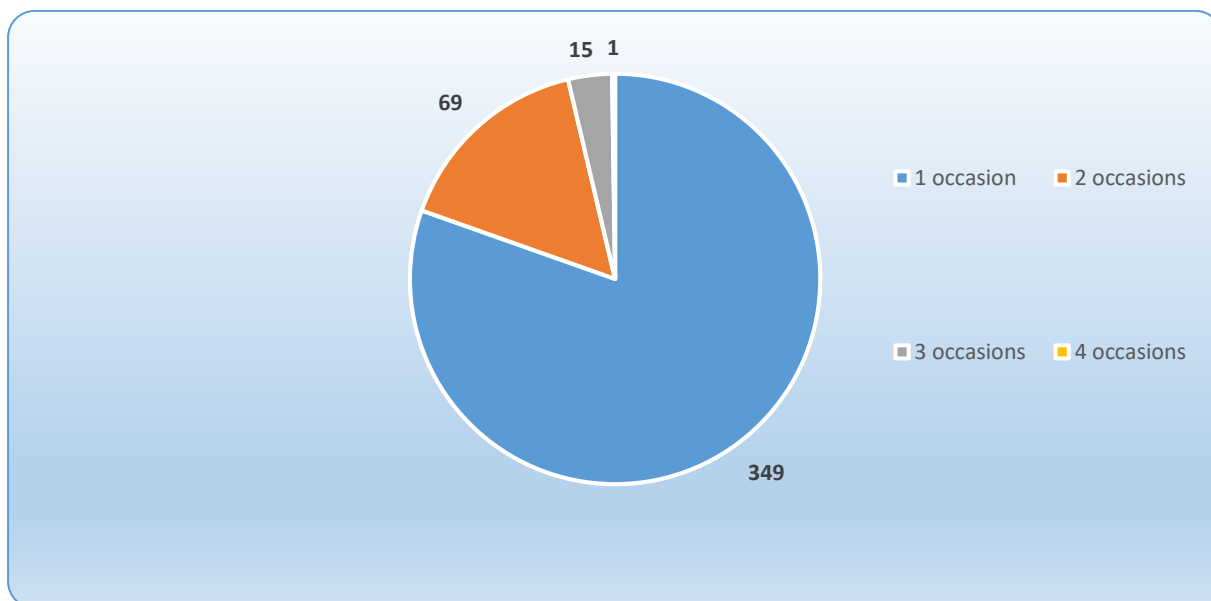
- 28% of days lost to Psychiatric / Mental Health identified as work related
- 4 employees with one or more absences - Mental Health
- 82 occasions of absence - Mental Health



## Number reporting sickness

- Number of staff reporting sick – **431**
- Number of occasions of sickness absence - **536**

## Number of occasions of absence per employee



## Impact - Financial / Staff Resources

- The cost of lost time for the six-month period is estimated at **£398,718** based on an average salary of **£23,107.11 – £11.98** per hour (Average Salary). These costs do not include on-costs, cover arrangements or management time to manage the sickness.

## Management of Sickness Absence – Education (including Schools)

- **21** Open sickness cases as at 30.09.19
- **56** Occupational health referrals made during the period
- Number of Trigger Breaks based on the most recent absence in the period for each employee ( however they may have broken more than one trigger in the rolling year)  
Data:
  - **69 employees - 3 or more occasions**
  - **90 employees - 10 or more days absence**
  - **95 employees - 3 or more occasions & 10 or more days**
  - **177 employees - Did not hit a trigger**
- **39%** Return to work meetings required have been recorded on iTrent
- **6** verbal warnings and **1** written warning issued
- **2** Dismissal on Medical Capability

# Agenda Item 10

*Executive Committee and Council only*

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: N/A

Committee: **Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee**  
Date of meeting: **15<sup>th</sup> January 2020**  
Report Subject: **Forward Work Programme – 26<sup>th</sup> February 2020**  
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Joanne Collins, Executive Member Education**  
Report Submitted by: **Cllr Haydn Trollope, Chair of the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
x	x	20.12.19			15.01.20			

1. **Purpose of the Report**
  - 1.1 To present to Members the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for the Meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2020, for discussion and to update the Committee on any changes.
2. **Scope and Background**
  - 2.1 The Scrutiny Work Programmes are key aspects of the Council's planning and governance arrangements and support the requirements of the Constitution.
  - 2.2 The topics set out in the Forward Work Programme link to the strategic work of the Council as identified by the Council's Corporate Plan, corporate documents and supporting business plans. Effective work programmes are essential to ensure that the work of scrutiny makes a positive impact upon the Council's delivery of services.
  - 2.3 The Committee's Forward Work Programme was agreed in June / July 2019, recognising the fluidity of the document to enable the Committee to respond to urgent and emerging issues, and included timescales when reports will be considered by the Committee. The work programme is managed and implemented by the Scrutiny and Democratic Officer under the direction of the Chair and Committee.
  - 2.4 The forward work programme for the forthcoming meeting will be presented to Committee on a 6 weekly cycle in order that Members can consider the programme of work; request information is included within the reports, as appropriate and / or make amendments to the work programme.
3. **Options for Recommendation**
  - 3.1 **Option 1:** The Scrutiny Committee consider the Forward Work Programme for the meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2020, and:
    - Make any amendments to the topics scheduled for the meetings;

- Suggest any additional invitees that the committee requires to fully consider the reports; and
- Request any additional information to be included with regards to the topics to be discussed.

3.2

**Option 2:** The Scrutiny Committee agree the Forward Programme for the meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2020, as presented.

**Background Documents /Electronic Links**

- Appendix 1 – Forward Work Programme –Meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2020

**Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee**  
**Forward Work Programme**

**Scrutiny Meeting Date:** Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2020

**Scrutiny Deadline to receive reports:** Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> February 2020

Report Title	Lead Officer	Purpose of Report	Method/ Expert Witness/Exec Member	Latest CLT Sign Off Date	Executive Meeting Date	Council Meeting Date
School Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education Statutory deadline for the policy to be agreed and published by the 15 <sup>th</sup> April each year.	Lynn Phillips / Claire Gardner	<b>Policy Development</b> Members to provide their views and comments on the policy, and propose any relevant changes, additions etc. prior to Executive Committee approval.	Agenda Item	11.02.20	11.03.20	N/A
Education Achievement Service (EAS) Business Plan 2020/21 ( <i>Report to include progress on the 2019/20 plan</i> )	Michelle Jones	<b>Service Delivery</b> To consult Members on the EAS Business Plan for 2020/21.	Agenda Item	11.02.20	11.03.20	N/A
School Categorisation	Michelle Jones	<b>Monitoring</b> To inform Members of the new national school categorisation system and Blaenau Gwent school categorisation profile for 2020.	Agenda Item	11.02.20	11.03.20	N/A
Inspire to Achieve / Work Performance	Lynn Phillips / Joanne Sims	<b>Monitoring</b> Members to consider and monitor the performance in line with targets and spend.	Agenda Item	11.02.20	11.03.20	N/A
Draft Self evaluation	Lynette Jones	<b>Service Delivery</b> To ensure that Members contribute to the development of the self-evaluation report for Local Government Education Services and to determine the actions arising from the SER are appropriate and aligned to the service needs for children and young people.	Agenda Item	11.02.20	11.03.20	N/A
Final School Performance	Michelle Jones	<b>Monitoring</b> To provide Members with a summary of performance in line with accountability changes	Agenda Item	11.02.20	11.03.20	N/A

Report Title	Lead Officer	Purpose of Report	Method/ Expert Witness/Exec Member	Latest CLT Sign Off Date	Executive Meeting Date	Council Meeting Date
		to ensure that children and young people are provided with the best start in life. (KS4 final).				
Blaenau Gwent Education Accessibility Strategy and Action Plan	Lynn Phillips / Claire Gardner	<b>Policy Development</b> Members to provide their views and comments on the strategy and associated action plan, and propose any relevant changes, additions etc. prior to Executive Committee approval.	Agenda Item	11.02.20	11.03.20	N/A