

DRAFT AGENDA

ID	2399
Committee	Pwllgor Craffu Addysg a Dysgu
Date	26/01/2022
Attendees	<p>Cynghorwyr Haydn Trollope (Cadeirydd)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Julie Holt (Is-gadeirydd)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Derrick Bevan (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Garth Collier (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Martin Cook (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Malcolm Day (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr D. Lyn Elias (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Stewart Healy (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr John Hill (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Clive Meredith (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr John C. Morgan (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorydd John P. Morgan (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Tommy Smith (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Bob Summers (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr David Wilkshire (Aelod Pwyllgor)</p> <p>Mr. Tim Baxter (Co-Optee)</p> <p>Mr. Tim Pritchard (Co-Optee)</p> <p>Lynn Phillips (Swyddog)</p> <p>Luisa Munro-Morris (Swyddog)</p> <p>Michelle Jones (Swyddog)</p> <p>Julia Carmichael (Swyddog)</p> <p>Claire Gardner (Swyddog)</p> <p>Joanne Sims (Swyddog)</p> <p>Gemma Wasley (Swyddog)</p> <p>Liz Thomas (Swyddog)</p> <p>Leeann Turner (Secretary)</p> <p>Gwasanaethau Democrataidd (Monitor)</p> <p>Cynghorwyr Joanne Collins (Monitor)</p> <p>Pob Cynghorydd (Monitor)</p> <p>Louise Bishop (Notify)</p> <p>Sean Scannell (Notify)</p> <p>Richard Crook (Notify)</p> <p>Rhian Hayden (Notify)</p> <p>Damien McCann (Notify)</p> <p>Michelle Morris (Notify)</p> <p>Steve Berry (Swyddog)</p> <p>Andrea Jones (Swyddog)</p>

Item ID	5766
Item Title	Cyfieithu ar y Pryd

Summary	Mae croeso i chi ddefnyddio'r Gymraeg yn y cyfarfod, mae angen o leiaf 3 diwrnod gwaith o hysbysiad ymlaen llaw os dymunwch wneud hynny. Darperir gwasanaeth cyfieithu ar y pryd os gwneir cais.
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Item ID	5767
Item Title	Ymddiheuriadau
Summary	Derbyn ymddiheuriadau.

Item ID	5768
Item Title	Datganiadau Buddiant a Goddefebau
Summary	Ystyried unrhyw ddatganiadau buddiant a goddefebau a wnaed.

Item ID	5867
Item Title	Sefyllfa Ddiweddaraf Covid mewn Addysg ac ar draws y Stad Ysgolion
Summary	Diweddariad llafar gan y Cyfarwyddwr Corfforaethol Addysg.

Item ID	5769
Item Title	Cofnodion Pwyllgor Craffu Addysg a Dysgu
Summary	Derbyn cofnodion y cyfarfod o'r Pwyllgor Craffu Addysg a Dysgu a gynhaliwyd ar 30 Tachwedd 2021. (Dylid nodi y cyflwynir y cofnodion er pwyntiau cywirdeb yn unig).

Item ID	5866
Item Title	Dalen Weithredu – 30 Tachwedd 2021
Summary	Derbyn y Ddalen Weithredu.

Item ID	5868
Item Title	Adroddiad Cyfarwyddwr Corfforaethol Gwasanaethau Addysg
Summary	Ystyried adroddiad y Cyfarwyddwr Corfforaethol Addysg.

Item ID	5869
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Item Title	Cyfarwyddiaeth Addysg – Cynllun Adfer ac Adnewyddu
Summary	Ystyried adroddiad y Cyfarwyddwr Corfforaethol Addysg.

Item ID	5870
Item Title	Adroddiad Perfformiad Gwasanaeth Ieuentid 2020 – 2021
Summary	Ystyried adroddiad y Cyfarwyddwr Corfforaethol Addysg.

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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 – 30TH NOVEMBER, 2021

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR H. TROLLOPE (CHAIR)

Councillors: J. Holt
 D. Bevan
 M. Cook
 G.A. Davies (substitute for Cllr M. Day)
 S. Healy
 J. Hill
 C. Meredith
 J.C. Morgan
 K. Rowson (substitute for Cllr J.P. Morgan)
 T. Smith
 B. Summers

AND: Corporate Director of Education
 Head of School Improvement & Inclusion
 Service Manager Inclusion
 Service Manager Young People & Partnerships
 Pupil & Student Officer
 Press & Publicity Officer
 Scrutiny & Democratic Officer / Advisor

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	
No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p>	

	<p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G. Collier, M. Day, L. Elias, J.P. Morgan and D. Wilkshire.</p> <p><u>Co-opted Member</u> T. Baxter</p> <p>Service Manager Education Transformation & Business Change Strategic Education Improvement Manager</p> <p><u>Welcome</u></p> <p>The Chair welcomed Julia Carmichael, the recently appointed Service Manager for Inclusion to her first meeting of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee.</p>	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p>	
No. 4	<p><u>EDUCATION & LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The Minutes of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 19th October, 2021 were submitted, whereupon:-</p> <p><u>Item 10 - Forward Work Programme – 30th November, 2021</u></p> <p>With regard to the request for information regarding the number of surplus places be included in the Management of Pupil Places and the School Estate 2020/21 report, a Member commented that information in relation to the number of surplus places in primary schools had not been included, only information regarding secondary schools had been provided.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 5	<p><u>ACTION SHEET - 19TH OCTOBER, 2021</u></p>	

The action sheet arising from the meeting of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee held on 19th October, 2021 was submitted, whereupon:-

Item 8 – Pupil Exclusions

A Member requested clarification on the information provided regarding data for exclusions of Children Looked After. The Head of School Improvement & Inclusion would seek clarification if this was current data and provide further detail on the information provided regarding ‘other’ reasons for exclusions i.e. the use of mobile phones in classrooms.

The Corporate Director of Education confirmed that further anonymised detail around specific cases regarding exclusions to provide some background information could be provided. With regard to social media posts, there was rising concern but he assured Members they were supporting schools to be vigilant as much as possible. A letter had been drafted to parents advising them to be particularly vigilant with their children’s social media posts, as this did have an impact upon the school and staff well-being.

The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the action sheet be noted.

No. 6

COVID UPDATE POSITION IN EDUCATION AND ACROSS THE SCHOOL ESTATE

At the invitation of the Chair the Corporate Director of Education gave a brief verbal update position in education and across the school estate in response to COVID-19.

The Corporate Director advised that the overall incidence rates in Blaenau Gwent continued to fall and were currently at 412 per 100,000 population and Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council was ranked 20th in Wales. This was an improving situation although the Gwent Incident Management Team (IMT) agreed that the regional risk remained high for schools across the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board. Positive count cases for pupils currently stood at 58, and workforce cases overall were stable with less than 40 staff affected across all Blaenau Gwent schools. He advised there were two primary schools

	<p>and one secondary school that had introduced elements of blended learning and this was under constant review to ensure full face to face learning returned to those settings when safe.</p> <p>Recently there had been a number of Welsh Government announcements associated with the Omicron variant, mostly regarding stronger wording for the use of face coverings. The Director confirmed that there were no material changes for Blaenau Gwent schools as secondary staff and pupils had already been using face coverings in indoor settings.</p> <p>He informed Members that national advice was still awaited regarding consideration of 12 to 15 year olds being offered a second dose of the vaccine, if this was formally taken forward, there would be communication with schools as this would impact upon learners in secondary settings.</p> <p>He summarised that it was largely an improving situation, but there remained cause for concern, particularly around the new variant Omicron that was emerging.</p>	
<p>No. 7</p>	<p><u>EDUCATION DIRECTORATE – ALN REFORM UPDATE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education and the Head of School Improvement and Inclusion which was presented to provide Members with an opportunity to review the progress made against ALN reform and associated policy renewal.</p> <p>The Head of School Improvement and Inclusion spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>The Chair commented that it was an excellent report but felt that it should be highlighted in the report that ALN reforms strived for the best for all pupils including the more-able and talented. The Head of School Improvement and Inclusion agreed with the Member’s comments and explained that with the ALN reforms the more-able and talented young people would not necessarily be in receipt of an Individual Development Plan (IDP) and when looking at universal and targeted provision they needed to ensure that the practice</p>	

	<p>going on in schools enables more-able children to thrive. They were working with the ALN Service and the Educational Psychology Service to clearly set out the responsibilities for each of those areas to ensure when they go to schools they are not just looking at supporting those pupils who may be struggling, they are also looking at supporting pupils who really need to be pushed into having those enriched experiences.</p> <p>A Member commented that the Act had been partially implemented since September 2021 and enquired if all the advice and guidance had been received to ensure that the code was being correctly implemented. The Head of School Improvement and Inclusion confirmed that guidance had recently been received and training for Headteachers and Local Authority Leads for Inclusion had been undertaken. However, there had been potential concerns regarding the guidance, particularly around parental guidance as this did not fit with the messages the Welsh Government had previously given. Concerns had been raised and a response was currently awaited from the Welsh Government to confirm if this was the definitive guidance.</p> <p>A Member commented that a number of schools were working extremely well on maths, and pointed out that in some schools math pupils were being mentored, and felt a briefing could be considered sometime in the future to look at what schools were doing regarding maths. He also commented on school to school working and how collaboration between schools was working well.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the report, associated documentation and proposed course of action be accepted.</p>	
<p>No. 8</p>	<p><u>SCHOOL ATTENDANCE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of School Improvement and Inclusion which was presented to provide opportunity for Members to scrutinise attendance data for Blaenau Gwent at Primary and Secondary school level for the academic year 2020-21 and the first half-term of the academic year 2021-22.</p>	

The Head of School Improvement and Inclusion spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.

The Chair referred to reducing exclusions and felt that reducing exclusions would not help attendance and may hinder it, he felt it was important to keep control of schools, especially returning after COVID, as pupils needed to feel safe in school and Headteachers should only use exclusions as a last resort. He also enquired regarding data for Elected Home Educated pupils (EHE).

With regard to reducing exclusions, the Head of School Improvement and Inclusion felt the report referred to the ambition around prevention, getting in early to ensure that young people were supported before they reach crisis point and possible exclusion. With regard to the EHE numbers, there had been an increase and the Officer would provide exact figures to Members in due course. She advised that the Welsh Government was focusing more on EHE learners and had undertaken a review of support to enable local authority intervention to check processes that parents had put in place.

A Member commented that it was important to know the reasons for non-attendance and that Officers were now focusing on this. He felt that Blaenau Gwent was performing well on pupil attendance in relation to the national figures, however, there had been a drop in pupil attendance in July and felt this may be due to parents taking their children on holiday early and enquired if a national study had been undertaken on this issue.

The Head of School Improvement & Inclusion said that the drop in pupil attendance for July probably resulted from parents taking advantage of the relaxation of COVID restrictions to take holidays. The Welsh Government was commissioning a report which was still awaited and she felt it would be interesting to see if the same reason was given across Wales for the fall in pupil attendance. She advised that they were not allowed to issue fines to parents at the moment as there was a need to support families and their well-being. However, there were some young people who had persistent absenteeism before COVID, and some families used COVID as a legitimate reason not to send

	<p>their children to school and these reasons could not be challenged.</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>No. 9</p>	<p><u>BLAENAU GWENT DRAFT 10-YEAR WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN CONSULTATION REPORT / ADRODDIAD YMGYNGHORI CYNLLUN STRATEGOL CYMRAEG MEWN ADDYSG 10-MLYNEDD BLAENAU GWENT</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education and the Service Manager Education Transformation and Business Change which was presented to provide Members with the opportunity to scrutinise the draft Blaenau Gwent 10-year Welsh in Education Strategic Plan, providing views, comments and responses in line with the consultation process.</p> <p>The Corporate Director of Education spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>A Member commented that if the Welsh Government wanted to increase the number of Welsh speakers they should consider making Welsh compulsory in schools and provide extra resources to facilitate this. The Director of Education said the provision of learning Welsh was already a statutory component of the curriculum and felt that it was crucial to provide provision through the medium of Welsh as early as possible within the education system.</p> <p>In response to a Member’s question regarding progress on developments for the Welsh school in Tredegar, the Director of Education said that progress was going well, some investigatory work on the proposed site had provided assurances that the site was suitable for development and at this point in time they were still on track to have the new school available from September 2023. He hoped that post pandemic site visits could be considered for Members to see some of the practices going on within schools.</p> <p>A Member commented that most schools in Blaenau Gwent used incidental Welsh throughout the school and thought</p>	

	<p>that all secondary schools taught Welsh, from year 7 pupil options were between full time Welsh or short course Welsh so that every child sat a Welsh exam. The Head of School Improvement & Inclusion said there was an expectation for schools to use incidental Welsh and that all young people from nursery upwards were having Welsh lessons.</p> <p>The Director of Education added that it was important to recognise within the WESP document the priority around Welsh as a second language and promoting that within English medium schools to increase the amount of use of the Welsh language in school settings.</p> <p>The Chair commented that it was important that parents with children who attended Welsh medium schools were supported. The Director of Education said that parental ability to be able to communicate via the Welsh language in home settings was an important consideration for learners being able to use the language in an immersive way. He advised that there was an element of Adult and Community Learning provision that needed to be strengthened moving forward to ensure that parents had the right skills to help and support their children in the medium of Welsh.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the draft 10-year Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) be accepted.</p>	
<p>No. 10</p>	<p><u>MANAGEMENT OF PUPIL PLACES AND THE SCHOOL ESTATE 2020/21</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Education and the Service Manager Education Transformation and Business Change which was presented to provide Members with the opportunity to scrutinise the management of pupil places and the school estate, throughout the 2020/21 academic session.</p> <p>The Corporate Director of Education spoke to the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>A Member enquired regarding the live birth data. The Director of Education advised that the Council was yet to</p>	

receive the 2020/21 live birth data from Aneurin Bevan University Health Board. With regard to planning for school places they also look at trend analysis as some schools received more applications. Both the birth rates and the trend analysis gave an overall picture that depicts likely projections for surplus places across the school estate. He advised that they were expecting the overall pupil population to increase and they were also starting to see some positive trends around inward migration into the county borough.

A Member referred to surplus places and was disappointed that information for primary schools had not been provided and requested that this be an action point for the next meeting.

The Director of Education clarified that the information presented in the table on page 325 related to secondary schools. He advised that a similar table had been produced for the primary sector and would ensure that was shared with Members. Surplus places in the primary sector had been in the region of 29% which had now been reduced significantly.

The Member referred to condition surveys that showed the condition of Blaenau Gwent schools had improved dramatically over a period of time. He referred to trend analysis and enquired if work was undertaken with parents, to share the improvements made to schools, to give them confidence to send their children to Blaenau Gwent schools, to reduce outward migration as pupil numbers affected school finances. The Director of Education confirmed that the data did include trend analysis and they worked with parents to give them assurances and confidence, that as learners transition from primary into secondary schools, that the secondary settings were well placed to from the quality of the learning environment perspective. He pointed out that this year Abertillery Learning Community year 7 had admitted 160 learners which had been a dramatic turnaround of the uptake of places within the school setting.

With regard to Penycwm school and the River Centre a Member enquired how these schools were assessed. The Director of Education said that capacity at Penycwm school had recently been increased to 175 and capacity at the

Director of
Education

River Centre was 64. As Special schools, the learners within those settings were placed via the Additional Learning Needs Panel and was based upon learners needs and requirements.

The Chair commented in relation to Ebbw Fawr Learning Community the data for January 2022 was 992 and reduced to 943 for January 2028 and raised concerns that with all the new residential developments being undertaken in Blaenau Gwent how the data was reducing. The Director of Education said the figures were based upon the anticipated pupil population coming through the system, which showed a slight decline in that area. Moving forward this would be compensated by the new housing developments taking place. The secondary phase was going to be meeting capacity in the near future but at this point in time it was difficult to make calculations on pupil populations with housing developments still in relatively early stages of development. There would be an annual review of the numbers but the Director was confident that Ebbw Fawr Learning Community would be reaching and meeting capacity over the next few years.

The Member accepted the Director's comments but reiterated his concerns that Ebbw Fawr Learning Community with reduced capacity would then not be able to accommodate the number of pupils.

A Member commented that the Education Directorate was fully aware of the situation with regard to Ebbw Fawr Learning Community and felt confident that they would look at future numbers and future provision the school could provide.

The Corporate Director of Education commented that three out of the four secondary settings were starting to have emerging sufficiency issues and as a consequence there needed to be investment within the school estate. He pointed out there was now less migration out of county to secondary learning settings which was very positive and was encouraging to note that Blaenau Gwent learners were receiving their teaching and learning in Blaenau Gwent settings.

	<p>The Chair felt that all Councillors should promote Blaenau Gwent schools and inform parents how good education in Blaenau Gwent schools was.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely that the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee considered the report, and provided comments relating to the current monitoring and reporting processes.</p>	
<p>No. 11</p>	<p><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – 1ST FEBRUARY, 2022</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chair of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>The Chair advised that the Forward Work Programme for the meeting on the 1st February, 2022 was substantial and proposed that a Special meeting of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee be arranged to consider the Youth Service Performance Report, the Recovery and Renewal report and the Education Directorate End of Year 2021 report.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely that the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for 1st February, 2022 consider the following reports:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 21st Century Schools Programme Bands B progress and education project overview • School Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education • Education ICT Strategy <p>And FURTHER AGREED that a Special meeting of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee be arranged to consider the following reports:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Service Performance Report • Recovery and Renewal report • Education Directorate End of Year 2021 report 	

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Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Action Sheet

Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee – 30th November 2021

Item	Action to be Taken	By Whom	Action Taken
8	<u>School Attendance</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Further information to be provided in relation to the pupils excluded for using a mobile phone and the setting off of a fire alarm.• Elected Home Educated Pupils – Current numbers to be provided.• Detail of exclusion codes to be provided	Luisa Munroe-Morris	See attached
10	<u>Management of Pupil Places and the School Estate 2020/21</u> <p>In relation to Appendix 7 – breakdown of Primary Schools to be provided.</p>	Claire Gardner	See attached

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Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee

Response to actions in relation to School Attendance Report:

- The pupil that was excluded for the reason 'using a mobile phone in school' was listening to music on their phone and was asked to stop, and the pupil then went on to message someone and was asked to hand the phone over to the teacher which the pupil refused, the situation escalated as the pupil walked out of the class and there was an issue in the corridor.
- With regards to the fire alarm – there have been a number of exclusions linked to students setting off fire alarms in their schools

- There are currently 130 pupils on the EHE database (30/11/21). The numbers fluctuate so on the same day in 2020 there were 99, and in 2019 76.

- **EXCLUSION CODES**
 - PP Physical Assault – of a Pupil
 - PA Physical Assault – of an Adult
 - BU Bullying
 - RA Racist Abuse
 - VP Verbal Abuse/Threat – to a Pupil
 - VA Verbal Abuse/Threat – to an Adult
 - DB Persistent Disruptive Behaviour
 - DA Drug and Alcohol
 - TH Theft
 - DM Vandalism/damage
 - SM Sexual misconduct
 - OT Other - Other should be used sparingly and where the reason is not listed above so other could cover one off incidents such as use of a mobile phone in the classroom, setting off the fire alarm maybe.

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Jan-21

School	2020/2021 capacity	actual NOR Jan 2021 (exc. SEN)	% surplus places as at Jan 2021	2021/22 capacity	Jan 2022	2022/23 Capacity	Jan 2023	Jan 2024	Jan 2025	Jan 2026	Jan 2027	Jan 2028	Jan 2022	Jan 2023	Jan 2024	Jan 2025	Jan 2026	Jan 2027	Jan 2028	
SECONDARY SCHOOLS																				
Abertillery Learning Community, Secondary Campus	750	672	10	750	722	750	743	754	767	776	736	720	4	1	-1	-2	-3	2	4	
Brynmaur Foundation School	755	636	16	755	633	755	614	638	625	649	657	642	16	19	15	17	14	13	15	
Ebbw Fawr Learning Community Secondary Phase	1191	944	21	1191	992	1191	1024	1006	1007	1000	964	943	17	14	16	15	16	19	21	
Tredegar Comprehensive	758	692	9	770	746	760	714	719	736	752	735	771	3	6	5	3	1	3	-1	
TOTALS	3454	2944	15	3466	3093	3456	3095	3117	3135	3177	3092	3076	11	10	10	9	8	11	11	

	Jan-21			01/091/2022				Jan-23			Jan-23		Sep-23		Sep-24	
	Capacity 2019/20	actual No on Roll	Overall Proj No	capacity 2020/21	Proj No	Overall Proj No	capacity 2020/21	Proj No	Overall Proj No	Proj No	Overall Proj No	Proj No	Overall Proj No	Proj No	Overall Proj No	
Primary	5978	5167	14	5885	5115	13	5813	5116	12	5062	13	4981	14	4899	16	
Secondary	3454	2944	15	3466	3093	11	3456	3095	10	3117	10	3135	9	3177	8	
Total	9432	8111	14	9351	8208	12	9269	8211	11	8179	12	8116	12	8076	13	

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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 Special Scrutiny Committee**
Date of meeting: **26th January 2021**
Report Subject: **Corporate Director's Report of Education Services
Spring and Summer Terms 2021**
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Joanne Collins, Executive Member for Education**
Report Submitted by: **Lynn Phillips, 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)
09.12.21	23.12.21	13.01.22			26.01.22	02.03.22		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to present the Corporate Director of Education's Spring and Summer Terms Report (2021), which is attached as Appendix 1.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 It is a statutory responsibility of the Corporate Director of Education to assess the effectiveness of the delivery of Education and produce updates for Members that forms part of the Annual Council Reporting Framework. The provision of Education is regulated under the Estyn Local Government Education Services (LGES) framework and this report will complement the Directorate's self-evaluation arrangements.
- 2.2 This is the first time that the Education Directorate has produced such a report, and moving forward, it is intended to bring annual reports to Members in the Autumn term in line with performance within the previous academic year.

3. Options for Recommendation

- 3.1 The report has been considered by Education's DMT and the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT).

3.2 Option 1

Members are asked to scrutinise the information detailed within the Corporate Director of Education's Spring/Summer terms 2021 report and contribute to the continuous assessment of effectiveness by making appropriate recommendations to the Executive Committee.

3.3 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 It is a statutory responsibility of the Corporate Director of Education to assess the effectiveness of the delivery of Education and an annual report will be produced, in line with the Scrutiny and Executive's Forward Work Programme.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

The attached report identifies the financial and budgetary implications from April 2021 to September 2021.

5.2 **Risk including Mitigating Actions**

The Education service maintains a Directorate Risk Register, which is aligned to both service level and corporate risks. The attached report highlights the main risks currently under consideration and the mitigation. The risk register is reviewed as part of the business planning process and included within the performance reporting of the Education service.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 The detailed performance information is included within Appendix 1. The Education Directorate is working together with key stakeholders on a joint purpose to deliver 'Better Schools, Better Citizens and Better Communities – all through a children and young person centred approach'.

6.2 The Education Directorate's priorities outlined in the Education Improvement Plan (EIP) are as follows:

- Improve outcomes and wellbeing for pupils, particularly at KS4, through effective governance arrangements;
- Delivery of the vision for education to support all learners in a modern and safe environment;
- Transforming education in line with curriculum, qualifications and ALN reform that is fit for the 21st Century;
- Deliver community based learning and recreation provision to meet need; and,
- Creating a performance culture for Education and Leisure that delivers improved value for money.

6.3 The proposed structure of the Corporate Director's report covers the following areas;

- An Introduction - Context of Education in Blaenau Gwent
- Corporate Director's Overview
- COVID 19 and Recovery from the Pandemic
- Local Political Leadership, Governance and Accountability
- Estyn - Regulatory Activity
- Departmental Priorities
- Progress Against the Priorities - Updates
- Improving Schools Programme 2021

- Key Performance Indicators
 - Budget 2021/22 - Quarters 1 & 2
 - Directorate Risk Register
- 6.4 It is intended to review the structure of the first annual report following both Officer and Member discussion to ensure that the report is fit for purpose in the 2021-22 full academic year and the next iteration of the report.
- 6.5 **Expected outcome for the public**
Reporting performance provides the public with the opportunity to view progress of the Education Directorate and ensure accountability.
- 6.6 **Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)**
The Blaenau Gwent 'We Want' Plan looks to build and strengthen on existing arrangements by involving service users, carers and other key partners where possible in helping shape and influence future design of services.
- 6.7 **Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)**
The report enables the Education Directorate to plan for the future as spend, risk and performance is continuously reported on and provides a baseline of where the department is currently and where it needs to be in the future.
- 6.8 **Preventative focus**
The work undertaken by the Education Directorate promotes a preventative approach to practice through early identification and intervention. The respective teams have an active rather than re-active approach to service planning can also help with planning resources and ensuring value for money services are delivered.
7. **Monitoring Arrangements**
- 7.1 The performance of the Education Directorate is monitored via the business planning process and reported through the democratic process via various reporting mechanisms including the Finance and Performance Report, the Assessment of Performance and various performance monitoring reports.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- Appendix 1 –Report of the Corporate Director of Education Services 2021

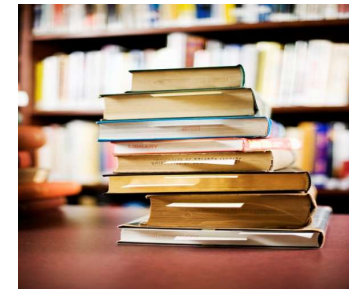
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Education Directorate

Director of Education Report

Quarter 1 and 2 (April 2021 to September 2021)



*'The Education Directorate, working together with key stakeholders on a joint purpose to deliver **better schools, better citizens and better communities** – all through a children and young person centred approach'*

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Introduction

Welcome to the Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's report of the Director of Education. The report covers the period April to September 2021. The report is used to highlight the key areas of progress and improvements that the service has experienced. This report provides a mid-year review of the activity undertaken to date in academic year 2021-22.

This year's report will also include detail on the activity undertaken by the Directorate to respond to the global COVID-19 pandemic. It should be noted that the accountability framework in Wales had changed significantly and there was no end of Key Stage Assessments for the Foundation Phase, KS2 or 3 this year. Furthermore, the outcomes for students at the end of Key Stage 4 and those sitting AS and A Levels were subject to a series of process and policy changes throughout the year. The eventually published Centre Assessed Grades (CAGs) results have not been compared with any previous years.

The Council will continue to work with partners across the Council, for example, Children's Services, Regeneration, Legal, Finance and Organisational Development to focus the work on improving pupil outcomes and supporting school leaders. The Council will also continue to work with partners, such as the Education Achievement Service (EAS) to support school leaders to improve pupil outcomes and wellbeing.

Blaenau Gwent Context

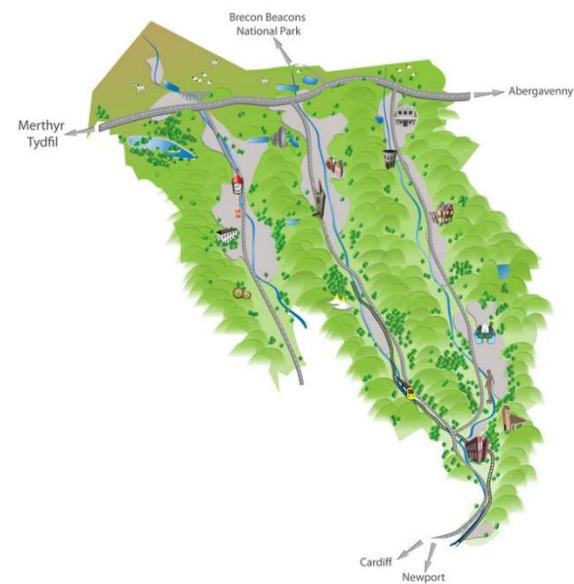
Blaenau Gwent is a place of heritage and dramatic change, with a sense of its past but its eyes firmly on the future. The area is relatively small geographically, being at most 15 miles north to south, and 8 miles east to west. Blaenau Gwent is defined physically by high hillsides dividing the three main valleys. These valleys are home to towns and villages which seem to merge together into one. However, each community proudly maintains its own character and traditions. Although the towns give the county borough a busy, urban feel, Blaenau Gwent is actually a largely rural area. Wherever you are, beautiful countryside is never far away. Figure BG01 below looks to give a visual representation of Blaenau Gwent, highlighting some of our distinctive local features.

Blaenau Gwent has 25 schools:

- 2 Maintained 3-16 Learning Communities;
- 1 Foundation Comprehensive;
- 1 Maintained Comprehensive;
- 1 x Maintained 3-18 Special School;
- 1 x Maintained 3-16 SEBD Special School; and
- 19 Primaries (of which 4 are voluntary aided / faith schools)

There are currently circa 9,000+ pupils on roll across all Blaenau Gwent schools.

The organisation, End Child Poverty, released new data in October 2020 with findings showing that the highest rates of child poverty in Wales are in Pembrokeshire and Blaenau Gwent. Blaenau Gwent is one of 5 counties in Wales to have seen a rise in the proportion of children living in poverty since 2015. The impact of poverty on children is well documented, with children from low-income families more likely to experience worse physical and mental health; do less well in school; and have fewer opportunities in the future. The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) captures the extent of deprivation as a proportion of residents living in each lower super output area (LSOA). The eight considerations of the WIMD are: income; employment; health; education, skills and training; geographical access to services; housing; physical environment; and community safety. Blaenau Gwent has the highest percentage of LSOAs in the most deprived areas across Wales at 10%, for income (19.1%), education (27.7%), and community safety (23.4%).



The proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals in Blaenau Gwent was almost 30% during 2010-16 and the highest of all LAs in Wales by a significant margin. The proportions declined during 2016-19, but BG remained the 2nd highest in Wales for all LA schools and highest for secondary schools during 2018-19. During 2021-22, the eligibility for FSM has again increased to circa 30%. Given the evidential relationship between pupil performance and deprivation (using eFSM as a proxy indicator), pupil outcomes in BG would be expected to be among the lowest in Wales. However, within Blaenau Gwent we have high ambitions for all of our learners and our socio-economic standing is a challenge that we are working to overcome to the benefit of all of our children and young people.

Overall, the 2019 WIMD figures and high eFSM eligibility reflect very high levels of deprivation within the County Borough. They also indicate the significant consideration required to improve educational outcomes to levels within other similar LAs and to consistently match the all-Wales averages. 2018-19 performance figures show that Blaenau Gwent has achieved parity, and indeed, out-performed some LAs in a number of measures confirming the progress being made within its schools. The 2020-21 KS4 and Post 16 KS5 provisional results will be included in the Summary SER via the performance data pack during the Autumn term to inform the on-going self-evaluation process, however, there is recognition the outcomes were awarded via the Centre Assessment Grades (CAGs) and/or the awarding examination body's assessed grade.

Age and Gender Population Profile

NCY	Females	Males
N1	194	206
N2	342	341
R	378	340
1	350	378
2	365	413
3	395	394
4	370	361
5	334	430
6	395	395
7	299	347
8	321	361
9	301	267
10	328	313
11	269	291
12	5	8
13		6
14	2	3
Totals	4648	4854

ALN Population Profile

NCY	School Action	Schools Action Plus	Statemented	No Additional Need
N1	5	6	1	388
N2	12	24	2	645
R	23	33	6	656
1	37	34	18	639
2	40	48	8	682
3	59	50	15	665
4	84	48	10	589
5	89	60	10	605
6	85	53	21	631
7	78	39	31	498
8	102	44	27	509
9	81	41	14	432
10	72	75	31	463
11	60	73	33	394
12			13	
13			6	
14			5	
Totals	827	628	251	7796

Director's Overview

Blaenau Gwent is a relatively small geographical area, with big ambitions for our schools and learners. We are determined to play our part in Wales being a first class education system with a clear ambition to increase the skills and standards of education across the County Borough. We fully support and are committed to the Welsh Government's national mission for educational transformation, including Curriculum and ALN Reforms. Blaenau Gwent's strategic aims that are advocated in our Recovery and Renewal Plan is to realise;

- All schools, education providers and support services are fully operational, with children and young people able to access a full range of provision and services both school and community based, in order to meet their: Educational; Social; Emotional; Behavioural; and other relevant needs.
- Blaenau Gwent children and young people are able to effectively transition from one stage of their education to another, with wellbeing as a primary focus, supporting them to achieve their potential.

Recovery and Renewal Focus - Education has developed a detailed impact assessment in collaboration with key partners including schools, in order to determine the key priorities for recovery and renewal. The 4 overarching priority areas of focus are as follows:

- **Learner Wellbeing**
- **Vulnerable Learners**
- **Academic Progress**
- **School Operations**

Over the last academic session school operations have been negatively affected by the pandemic. However, BG's corporate response in supporting our schools and learners during the COVID-19 pandemic has been largely effective. The latest Welsh Government operational guidance seeks to resume normal school operations from the autumn-term 2021. During the 2020/21 academic session, data collection and school's data management was reconfigured and/or suspended, therefore, we are currently working to establish the baseline for the above priorities as at September 2021. However, levels of COVID within the community are affecting the school's ability to resume normal practice. Therefore, the target for the autumn-term is to establish the new baseline. Education has worked to establish a detailed action plan for each impact area. The action plan details the work required with Council services, schools/headteachers, wider partners such as the Education Achievement Service, pupils and parents. The Education Directorate are now clearly focussing on the future. As a consequence, stakeholder engagement and communication plans are in place, with 3 consultative groups having been established as follows:

- Recovery and Renewal Group, Curriculum Reform Group and the School Operations Management Group



Lynn Phillips - Director Education



Cllr Joanne Collins - Executive Member Education

COVID-19 The Council's Response

In March 2020, a decision was made by the UK Government to put the UK into lockdown in order to try and minimise the spread of the global pandemic COVID 19.

In accordance with Emergency Planning arrangements, a GOLD Group was established in Blaenau Gwent which comprised of Corporate Leadership Team, supported by the Civil Contingency Manager and Communications Manager. The strategic aim of GOLD is to delay and mitigate, as far as practicable, the spread and impact of Coronavirus within the community. GOLD was supported by an Emergency Response Team, made up of Heads of Service and Service Managers working alongside partners including the Aneurin Leisure Trust, GAVO, Tai Calon and the Joint Trade Unions.

As part of its response, the Council had to act quickly and had to consider alternative methods of service delivery, ensuring that the most vulnerable in society were supported. This resulted in delivery of critical services only, with other available resources being redeployed to support the response.

Particular focus was on:

- Adult Social Services
- Refuse and recycling collection
- Public protection
- Development of school hubs to support vulnerable learners and key workers with childcare
- Supporting families eligible for free school meals
- The creation of locality hubs, working to support those vulnerable and shielding
- Supporting local businesses to access financial support

The Education Directorate's Response to COVID 19 – Recovery and Renewal

The Education Directorate has identified a number of priorities for recovery and renewal, as part of the response to the COVID-19 situation.

The recovery and renewal plan is in development and will be a working document, outlining how the Council will continue to support schools, both during, and beyond the pandemic. It is, however, highly likely that there will be a need to continue to move between alert levels and thus working to response and recovery throughout the remainder of this and the next academic year. Therefore, an effective approach to business continuity at each level is required. This is dealt with via the development and review of the WG's Local Infection Control Framework for Schools and BG's local COVID-19 Education Guidance document, operational plans and risk assessments. It is also a key feature of the aforementioned plan. An alert level information paper has been produced, which details the operational implications and changes at each stage.

Until the latter part of Spring-term, the Education Directorate was firmly focused on working with and supporting schools to continue to effectively adapt and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. A significant shift in practice, delivery and learning has occurred throughout the course of the pandemic, affecting every aspect of education and all associated provision. Therefore, in order to inform the development of a recovery and renewal plan, the Education Directorate undertook a detailed Impact Assessment to identify key impacts on education from the COVID-19 emergency. Each impact has been RAG rated to measure its seriousness. The impact assessment process provided the opportunity for reflection and review, learning from which has been taken forward to inform recovery and renewal priorities and planning.

The relationship between the Council and its schools is stronger than ever before. The aim is to create a shared vision and associated plan to address key priorities for the future of Education within Blaenau Gwent.

Recovery – Priorities

The Education Directorate's Recovery and Renewal plans are in line with the corporate approach led by the Director of Regeneration and Community Services. It needs to be acknowledged that the impact of the last 18 months on all aspects of our school communities, and in particular the disruption to teaching and learning, is far reaching. Recovery will need to be planned in the short, medium and long term for learner development and progression. The Education Directorate's top priority in the EAS business plan is to:

Minimise the impact of COVID-19 on learner development and progress, including improving the digital competency of all learners and staff in the wider Blaenau Gwent school community.

Renewal – Priorities

Through schools having to adapt to new ways of working, a number of positive outcomes have been evidenced. The Education Directorate will work with relevant stakeholders, including schools and the EAS, to use these outcomes to shape new ways of working across the Education Directorate and throughout the school estate. The core purpose of all schools in Blaenau Gwent will be to provide excellent learning and teaching for all our learners, but this will not mean a return to doing things as they were pre-pandemic, but to use the experience of the pandemic to shape education provision as we move forward.

Recovery – Priorities

The Education Directorate's Recovery and Renewal plans are in line with the corporate approach led by the Director of the Environment and Regeneration. It needs to be acknowledged that the impact of the last 18 months on all aspects of our school communities, and in particular the disruption to teaching and learning, is far reaching. Recovery will need to be planned in the short, medium and long term for learner development and progression. The Education Directorate's top priority in the EAS business plan is to;

'Minimise the impact of COVID-19 on learner development and progress, including improving the digital competency of all learners and staff in the wider Blaenau Gwent school community.'

Local Political Leadership, Governance and Accountability

The structure of the Education Directorate provides clear levels of management and accountability. As a whole, the Council has a clear governance and accountability framework in place which all directorates are signed up to. This framework identifies how reporting and monitoring works throughout the Council to create a 'golden thread'. This framework is complied with by Education who also have additional monitoring requirements as part of the Estyn Local Government Education Services (LGES) framework.

The Education Directorate is subject to audit, inspection and review by Estyn. On a termly basis the Director of Education and/or Senior Education Managers meet with Estyn to discuss achievements, performance and key challenges. The Directorate has one Executive Member who has portfolio responsibility for Education and Learning (including the Aneurin Leisure Trust). The Directorate is scrutinised by the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee. There is also a Safeguarding Scrutiny Committee which is a joint committee between the Social Services and Education and Learning Scrutiny Committees. Regular liaison meetings are held with the Directorate, the Executive Member and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Scrutiny Committee.

Engagement with Members

Aside from the work programmes for Scrutiny, Executive and Council, the Education Directorate also regularly engages with all Elected Members via a series of briefing sessions, aimed at informing Members of key areas of the Directorate to enhance their learning and understanding. The following sessions have taken place to date:

- EAS held a session on 17th May on 'Distance and Blended Learning across Blaenau Gwent Schools';
- Education, held a session on 30th September on 'Current Pressures Facing the Council' and Self-Evaluation;

How People Are Shaping Our Services

The Education Directorate is committed to providing high quality services to its citizens and uses various engagement methodologies in order to understand if the service is making the intended outcomes or if amendments to service delivery need to be considered. Throughout April to September 2021 a variety of engagement events have taken place:

- Wavehill Evaluation
- County Lines (consultation)
- Young People's Participation (focus group)
- Young People's Safe Areas (consultation)
- Aspire / Lego secondary school engagement with Year 8 Pupils (undertaken by the Regeneration Department)
- Establishing a new Welsh Medium Primary School in the Tredegar / Sirhowy Primary (consultation with Members) and the Proposal to Extend the Capacity at Penycwm Special School (consultation with Members)

Estyn Regulatory Activity - Summer Monitoring Letter

In July 2021, the Council received a letter from Estyn which provided an overview of the progress made in relation to recommendations from the overarching thematic report published in January 2021. The thematic report identified five recommendations for the Welsh Government and recognised that a whole system approach was needed to address these. The first three recommendations were more immediate and urgent in nature, whilst the last two recommendations would take longer to address. From discussions with the Directorate, feedback from learners and engagement work with schools, Estyn felt it was clear that, through collaboration, progress was made across Wales in equipping schools and learners to provide better remote learning experiences during the second lockdown. Below is an overview of the recommendations and a summary of the findings, full detail can be found in the following attachment.



Blaenau Gwent Estyn
Summer Letter.pdf

R1 Urgently address barriers to learning at home, particularly where this is due to a lack of access to suitable computers or adequate connectivity

- Weekly assessments were undertaken to assess the need for pupils requiring ICT devices and monthly monitoring also took place to consider the local authority's overall digital support for schools and families.
- The Shared Resource Service (SRS) provided devices within seven days of a need being identified.
- The local authority has planned to continue with these ICT arrangements until at least the end of the summer term 2021.
- As of May 2021, the local authority had loaned 1,359 devices and 161 Mi-Fi units to pupils.
- A review of the 'Digitally Disadvantaged Device' project plan future provision is being undertaken to allow all families continued digital access. Officers reacted responsively at the start of the pandemic but now have time to reflect and look at the digital learner journey more strategically.
- The local authority has recognised that many parents have a lack of pedagogical understanding and it is recognised that there may be a need to provide more learning opportunities for parents on how to support their children's literacy and numeracy at home, should there be a third wave.

R2 Improve the quality of the distance and blended learning experiences for pupils by supporting more effective teaching across and within schools and PRUs

- Officers are very positive about the work of Blaenau Gwent schools in developing and improving regional blended learning approaches.
- The Celebrate, Support, Share and Refine (CSSR) pilot involved 13 out of 25 local authority schools and will be extended in the summer term to include all schools.

- Local authority officers have monitored each school's provision using a blended learning survey. This has helped them identify areas that schools need to improve and to celebrate and share successful practice.
- The local authority's recovery and renewal plan outlines how they aim to build on the responses to their pupil survey to further strengthen distance learning should there be another wave of the pandemic.
- In the coming months, the Head of School Improvement and Inclusion will be meeting with various groups of pupils to gain more information on the impact of blended learning experiences on their education.

R3 Develop a coherent approach to improve progress in literacy, numeracy and the personal and social skills of vulnerable pupils disproportionately affected by the pandemic, for example pupils eligible for free school meals

- The Head of School Improvement and Inclusion is taking lead responsibility for the 'Education Recovery and Renewal' working group which includes headteachers and other key partners.
- One purpose of the group is to support the progress of all learners, with a strong focus on supporting vulnerable pupils who have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. The work of this group will be complemented by a review of the Inclusion Service to enable support to be targeted effectively at vulnerable pupils.
- To help overcome support engagement with the Gypsy, Roma or Traveller families, a Welsh Government grant has been used to appoint a member of staff to their Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupil support team.
- Across the local authority, there has been an increase in demand for counselling services. As a result, the counselling team has been increased.
- Since the start of the pandemic, the local authority has seen an increase in demand for elective home education (EHE). This has mainly been due to anxiety issues and officers are hopeful that many of these pupils will return to school in the future. Educational Welfare Officers have been keeping in touch with these families and has been linking them with schools so they can have support from professionals with home learning.

R4 Establish strategies to monitor and address the long-term impact of the pandemic on the physical and mental health of pupils

- The 'Education Recovery and Renewal' working group has a strong focus on supporting the physical and mental health of pupils. Officers feel that, over the last year, supporting pupils' wellbeing has been a strength in all schools and was recognised in pupil surveys and engagement with parents.
- The Education Recovery and Renewal Plan 2021/22 will inform a three-year plan to support the long-term actions needed to improve the physical and mental health of pupils.
- The Head of School Improvement has considered a range of evidence on the physical and mental health of pupils and will be engaging with a wide range of stakeholders during the summer term to obtain first-hand evidence of the impact of the pandemic on pupils' mental and physical health.
- The local authority is committed to continue to deliver a wide range of sport, physical activity, community engagement and swimming opportunities across Blaenau Gwent and Aneurin Leisure Trust intends to build on their current 'Family Engagement' project for the most vulnerable families.

- Funding has been secured to pay for the six schools with the highest number of eFSM pupils to run the School Holiday Enrichment Programme (SHEP), a school-based education programme that provides food and nutrition education, physical activity, enrichment sessions and healthy meals to children in areas of social deprivation during the school summer holidays.
- The Youth Service are continuing to offer support to young people in schools and across communities. They are continuing to work closely with organisations, such as the Rotary Club, to help fund essential items such as food hampers. Officers are also engaging with schools to address the period dignity agenda, including working with third party organisations to help with the distribution of products for all family members.

R5 Create opportunities to take stock and evaluate the impact of policies and practices developed since the start of the pandemic to inform future ways of working and curriculum design

Education officers present regular reports to the Education and Learning Scrutiny and Executive Committees to reflect upon and to evaluate the effectiveness of the local authority's response to the pandemic. The top priority for education officers and the EAS business planning for 2021/22 is to maximise pupil progression and minimise the impact of the pandemic on learners. The local authority has developed local policies, guidance, risk assessments and operational plans for and with schools.

The local authority has established a Headteacher curriculum reform group with representation from all sectors. In this group, schools are invited to share their progress with curriculum reform. Representatives then highlight which schools have good practice to share and which schools need additional support in implementing the new curriculum. Officers feel that the EAS has provided very good curriculum training sessions for all schools and the uptake from Blaenau Gwent schools has been high [*school feedback is showing that the support received was useful but would now like for more practical support*]. They feel in a good position to build on the positives from their blended learning approach to enhance curriculum reform. This includes enhancing opportunities for pupils to work independently using blended learning approaches. In conjunction with the EAS, the local authority will organise bespoke training packages to avoid duplication. Officers feel that the local authority are in a good position for schools to support each other on their journey.

Departmental Priorities 2021/22

Directorate Priorities		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve outcomes and wellbeing for pupils, particularly at KS4, through effective governance arrangements • Delivery of the vision for education to support all learners in a modern and safe environment • Transforming education in line with curriculum, qualifications and ALN reform that is fit for the 21st Century • Deliver community based learning and recreation provision to meet need • Creating a performance culture for Education and Leisure that delivers improved value for money 		
Education Transformation and Business Change Priorities	Inclusion and Improvement Priorities	Young People and Partnerships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop, review and implement Education Transformation policies and strategies, to secure effective access to education and associated provision, improve outcomes and wellbeing for all pupils; whilst also fulfilling the team's statutory responsibilities and ensuring regulatory compliance. • Ensure an effective and informed approach to school organisation, which facilitates the vision for education, and contributes to improving standards of delivery. • Secure an effective partnership approach between the Council and its schools, which seeks to improve delivery and support mechanisms/services including: review, development and renewal of Service Level Agreements (SLA's) and effective strategic procurement processes • Ensure effective national and regional working arrangements are in place, to facilitate the sharing of good practice, coordination of key strategic priorities, and in order to maximise opportunities for joint working and partnership approaches. • Develop, review and implement transformation programmes, projects and plans to facilitate effective curriculum delivery; whilst also contributing to key strategic priorities including: Welsh-medium education and Additional Learning Needs (ALN) reform. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to secure effective, efficient and economical high quality provision for our vulnerable learners, progressing our vision for education • Improve progress for learners with ALN through successful implementation of the ALN and Educational Tribunal Act 2018 • Contribute to strong governance arrangements including self-evaluation (SE) and improvement planning. • Maintain and enhance the self-evaluation processes for the department so they are the best that they can be • Progress our Vision for Education across our learning communities in line with the strategic approach to school improvement (schools to schools work and professional working) • Further develop our processes, via the intelligent-client role, to hold the EAS effectively to account for commissioned school improvement services. • To ensure that all children and young people in LGEs settings are safe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving educational standards and life chances of children and young people through delivering an effective Youth Service • Achieving the outcomes within the Leisure and Cultural Strategy through effective oversight and governance of commissioned services • Improving life chances of young people and young adults from education through to employment through enabling an effective partnership approach to Post 16 delivery

Progress against the Priorities

Improve outcomes and wellbeing for pupils, particularly at KS4, through effective governance arrangements

Self-Assessment – The Education Directorate Leadership team has all positions fully appointed to. This has created capacity and a strong team to take the Education Directorate forward, especially in the way that we support children and young people in both school/college and community settings.

The quality of reports to CLT/Scrutiny/Executive is continuing to improve and there is robust self-evaluation, risk management, financial management and performance coaching arrangements in place. There continues to be robust governance arrangements in place between the Council and the EAS to monitor school performance. A Corporate Group has been established to oversee Self-Evaluation and Estyn preparedness. The Main SER was reported to Scrutiny Committee in September 2021. The reporting of Council/School level performance data has been relaxed over the last two academic years in Wales by WG. However, Summer 2021 KS4 results demonstrated progress in Capped 9 and L2inc. scores and were in line with the targets set in the 4 secondary settings SDPs. The KS4 Centre Determined Grades in 2021 generated very few appeals. A Strategic Post 16 Partnership has been established to ensure that BG learner pathways into Further Education are very much strengthened. The Learning Zone's performance at KS5 continues to be good and A Level pass rates for A*-E were 99,1%, which is in line the Welsh mean average. Reports on Improving Schools were presented to the Executive/Scrutiny Committees.

There are 4 schools currently identified as a School Causing Concern/ Team Around the School approach, however, it is likely that 2 schools will be removed during the next academic year. There continues to be very good progress made at Abertillery Learning Community (ALC), Brynmawr Foundation School (BFS) and Sofrydd Primary Schools. BFS will be subject to an Estyn Monitoring Visit early in the Autumn term. The River Centre has not responded appropriately to the pre-warning notice letter, therefore, a Statutory Warning Notice was issued on the 14th September. The ALC Corporate Group is working effectively and the revenue financial position is improving with deficit reducing to circa £324,000 when the prediction was in the region of £1m. Sofrydd Primary School appointed a permanent Headteacher early in the new academic year and is highly likely to be removed from the Schools Causing Concern (SCC) category in academic year 2021-22.

Finally, the corporate and education response to COVID-19 has been strong, as evidenced in the Estyn Thematic Review findings. The Estyn Summer letter received towards the end on the Summer term, provided additional feedback from the Inspectorate. The Education Directorate has established a Recovery and Renewal Plan to respond to the COVID pandemic and this features as part of the Scrutiny/Executive FWPs.

Delivery of the vision for education to support all learners in a modern and safe environment

Self-Assessment – The corporate and education response to COVID-19 has been strong, as evidenced in the Estyn Thematic Review Summer letter. The Directorate is well placed to move forward on the Recovery and Renewal priorities and these have been shared and discussed with Members of the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee. The collaboration agenda and partnership working has been strengthened, particularly the relationships with the schools, Post 16 providers and the Aneurin Leisure Trust.

The Vision for Education is embedded i.e. a school-led self-improving system. However, the vision is under review based on a new approach of 'Better Schools, Better Citizens and Better Communities'.

There will be consultation/engagement starting in 2021-22. There is strong progress on the Welsh-medium school consultation which has concluded and implementation is planned from September 2023. The Pen-y-Cwm consultation has now concluded with positive feedback overall. Works were completed over the Summer, but it is recognised that space will remain a focus at the school going forward due to the increase in pupils with profound and complex needs. As a result, within the consultation approach, there is the provision for consideration of additional capacity creation as a Part 2 proposals. The proposal is now in implementation stages and the capacity will increase to 175 in 2021-22.

School to school working has continued throughout the period, but physical attendance on sites has been largely curtailed due the stringent risk assessment measures that are in place to prevent the spread of the virus. As such, schools have become competent at varying their approaches to school to school work, particularly cluster working.

The appointment of the Head of School Improvement and Inclusion and the Service Manager Inclusion will further strengthen the intelligent client role to ensure that barriers to learner progress are mitigated in a timely manner. This continues to provide beneficial support to schools as, over time, effective networks have been established to enable this approach. Work is ongoing to re-establish face to face learning so that the commissioned service is able to provide the authority with judgements that are validated through first hand evidence. This work will be key to informing the Recovery and Renewal phase of the Council's response to the pandemic. The School Budget Forum will be the forum to take forward the SLA renewal process and the Service Manager for Education Transformation and Business Change has been identified as the lead officer within the Directorate. Liaison with schools is underway and there has been strong progress made on the Hwb EdTech initiative across the school estate.

The River Centre is a SCC and the Governing Body's response to the Service Agreement, intended to provide clarity over process between the LA and school, has created difficulty resulting in significant involvement from senior leaders. The response to the pre-warning notice letter is unsatisfactory and a Statutory Warning Notice has been issued. The Education Directorate are considering the next steps with the school and the potential use of intervention powers. A new Chair of Governors has been appointed and the strengthening of the Governing Body's effectiveness will continue to be a focus.

The FSM monitoring systems are working well and a process is in place for providing FSM direct payments to families that have been asked to self-isolate. The purpose of the meeting is to check against incidents reported against RPI's reported and to ensure that all staff are aware of the requirements and are trained accordingly.

Transforming education in line with curriculum, qualifications and ALN reform that is fit for the 21st Century

Self-Assessment – Blaenau Gwent is well placed to continue with the transformation of the Education Service and supporting children and young people. The strategic links with key partners such as the EAS, Coleg Gwent, Schools, WBL providers are effective. The Education Directorate has supported schools through the Centre Determined Grades (CDGs) changes effectively, and learner outcomes met SDP expectations.

Compliance with the WG's Admissions and School Organisation Codes is strong. The School Organisation Policy has been reviewed and updated accordingly. WG Code of Practice for ALN has now been finalised and is in place, however, the ALN and Inclusion functions are being reviewed. An update on the ALN Reform has been provided to both Scrutiny and Executive during the Autumn term 2021. Since September 2021, Tredegar Comprehensive School (TCS) has met with nearly all maintained schools across the LA, and engaged in high-quality professional dialogue with headteachers/SLT and ALNCos. Following these initial discussions, TCS will now put in place relevant and tailored support for each school, in order to realise fully the implementation plans for mandated years by Summer 2022.

The Council are well on track for implementing ALN reform. Where challenges for implementation have been identified, relevant training opportunities are being put in place for both senior leaders and ALNCos. Further training will also be commissioned for Governors.

The preparations for the 21st Century Schools Band B Programme are progressing well with WG business case submissions being made and agreed for key projects. The Managing School Places report is demonstrating progress towards meeting the SOP 15% target and will be presented to Members later in the term.

A Strategic Post 16 Partnership has been established to ensure that BG learner pathways into Further Education are further strengthened. The BG Learning Zone's performance at KS5 continues to be good.

The relationship between the Inclusion and Youth Service is strong. Joint funding approaches through the ALN grant mean that a broader spectrum of support can be offered to young people.

Deliver community based learning and recreation provision to meet need

Self-Assessment – The Education Portfolio has also changed in 2020-21 to include the client function for the Aneurin Leisure Trust. This is transforming the relationship between the Council and the Leisure Trust, with a new five-year agreement in place. A Leisure and Libraries Strategic Partnership Board has been established, which is Chaired by the Leader of the Council. The joint working between the Council and the ALT has improved significantly and the performance of the Trust is showing really encouraging signs of recovery. The ALT financial position has improved significantly and the Trust has supported the Council exceptionally well during the COVID-19 pandemic and with the community hub provision, in line with the new operating model.

All Youth Service provision has now reopened. Targeted services are seeing increases in referrals in all areas. The Education Directorate has reported on both the Youth Services performance and the Inspire initiative reports, which give strong evidence of continued good performance against the reach of the service, accredited outcomes and the level of NEETs.

The Directorate's Risk Register has been updated to reflect the risks associated with the closure of the ESF funding. There will be a need to review capacity within the Education Directorate, but particularly for the Education Transformation/Inclusion and Young People teams. Phase 2 restructuring plans are in the early stages of development. Awareness has been raised about the ESF programmes ending in July 2022, which puts approximately 25 full time members of staff at risk of redundancy. Regional groups are meeting to highlight this risk across South East Wales. However, a clear approach to securing new funding e.g. Shared Prosperity Fund is not in place to address the funding deficit.

The Welsh Government Youth Support Grant has been approved again this year, continuing with additional support around Mental Health and Youth Homelessness. Additional funding has been secured through the ALN grant last year and has been requested again this year, which will continue the alternative provision for those young people on the cusp of permanent exclusion.

The Youth Service has experienced challenges around recruitment as posts have traditionally been 'training' routes for young people and volunteers. However, these roles now require to be registered and qualified with the EWC, and finding qualified, registered workers available for part time work has not been possible. As a short term solution, the Youth Service is considering training staff on the job.

Creating a performance culture for Education and Leisure that delivers improved value for money

Self-Assessment – A performance culture is developing and the first Education and Leisure joint staff meeting took place in the Summer term. Engagement with BG's schools continues to be progressive and collegiate in approach.

There are improved processes in place between Education & Finance to ensure improved monitoring of the revenue and capital budgets. This has contributed to a favourable financial position at year-end circa £363,000. The Council provided schools with a 3.6% uplift in budgets during 2021-22 financial year. The management of school balances has been effective and budget considerations are discussed at School Budget Forum, including a review of the funding formula. The Education Directorate and the EAS are providing improved value for money i.e. standards are improving with less resources. The Q1 revenue budget is showing a favourable variance circa £196,000. The capital budget position is stable with a likely investment circa £26m into the school estate in the period up to 2021-26. However, there are some identified cost pressures associated with COVID and BREXIT and discussions are underway with WG e.g. Welsh medium primary school.

Business planning is secure, including a review of the priorities in the Education Improvement Plan (EIP). The FADE Register is up to date and the Risk Register has been updated, with only one corporate risk relating to ALC and BFS. The Directorate regularly reports SE through to the Education and Learning Scrutiny and Executive Committees. The quality of reports is improving and the level of scrutiny provided by Members continues to develop. There is continuity in both professional and political leadership within the Education Directorate.

Improving Schools Programme 2021

Schools requiring higher levels of support that have made positive progress 2019-2021

Since March 2020, there have been limited opportunities for Council/EAS staff to visit the schools in Blaenau Gwent to work alongside school leaders to undertake self-evaluation activity due to the pandemic. However, in-person opportunities to see provision and practice first-hand resumed to a limited degree during the Summer term 2021 and this has informed the progress evaluation of this report.

Brynmawr Foundation School:

- The school was inspected in October 2019 and placed within the category of schools requiring Special Measures.
- The school continues to be subject to a LA statutory warning notice to improve and intervention is now in place. The LA is currently reviewing the notice during the Autumn term.
- Governance has significantly improved. There are now no additional LA governors on the governing body.
- The school has had several beneficial changes in senior leadership since the core inspection, with 3 new assistant headteachers now in post and key subject leadership changes.
- During the pandemic, the school has engaged very well with EAS support and professional learning.
- A strong support plan is currently in implementation as part of the EAS Learning Network School model, working closely with Cardiff High School, with the Headteacher undertaking the role of School Improvement Partner. Coaching and mentoring of leaders forms the core of this support.
- The school is part of the national pilot for multi-agency support for schools in special measures national initiative, which involves a range of partners supporting the school and monitoring its progress in a systematic and responsive way, tailored to the specific needs of the school. The next LA led meeting is in early October 2021.
- Estyn will revisit the school to monitor its progress from 5th-8th October 2021.
- In addition to Learning Network School support, the school has engaged in a range of helpful programmes to support improvements in teaching and learning, preparing for curriculum reform, supporting wellbeing of learners and improving outcomes for disadvantaged learners.
- The school engaged very positively with the Celebrate, Share, Support and Refine initiative, which demonstrated that it had in place strong practice during the time of school closure in providing online learning for pupils, and good support for families within the community.

Progress update:

- From evidence seen in limited on-site visits during Summer 2021, there is still work to be done, but the school is making progress against its recommendations with good progress made in strengthening leadership.

Abertillery 3-16 Learning Community:

- The school was inspected in February 2018 and placed in the category of schools requiring significant improvement.
- The school is currently subject to an LA warning notice. The LA is currently reviewing this via the SCC meeting in the Autumn term.
- Governance has improved significantly. Governors have received a planned programme of EAS support and sub-committees are now working well.

- The Learning Community has had several changes in senior leadership since the inspection: a new substantive Headteacher was appointed in January 2020; a Deputy Phase Lead at Primary was appointed in Spring 2021; a new substantive Secondary Phase Lead started at Easter 2021; a new Secondary Assistant Headteacher started at Easter. The impact of leadership consolidation can now be seen in more consistent provision and practice across the community, with standards in books overall broadly in line with age and stage.
- The school is engaging well with Tonyrefail School as its Learning Network School. On-site visits between the schools commenced in May 2021, and Tonyrefail supported with an EAS/LA verification visit in May 2021, which included the Head of School Improvement and Inclusion.
- In addition to Learning Network School support, the school has engaged in a range of helpful programmes to support improvements in teaching and learning, developing middle leadership, preparing for curriculum reform, supporting wellbeing of learners and improving outcomes for disadvantaged learners.
- The school engaged very positively with the Celebrate, Share, Support and Refine initiative, which demonstrated that it had in place strong practice during the time of school closure in providing online learning for pupils, and good support for families within the community.

Progress update:

- The May verification visit looked at a limited but useful range of first-hand evidence, supporting the view that the school has made satisfactory progress overall against its inspection recommendations.
- Some aspects of the school's progress were identified as strong (e.g. leadership development).
- Estyn will revisit the school to monitor its progress during the spring term this year.

Sofrydd Primary School:

- The Local Authority commissioned a Leadership, Management, Teaching and Learning Review at the school, in February 2020. This review found significant shortcomings in the way the school was led and managed.
- A new substantive Headteacher was appointed in September 2021.
- The governing body is now carrying out all its statutory functions and governors report stronger engagement with the school.
- The school engaged very positively with the Celebrate, Share, Support and Refine initiative, which demonstrated that it had in place strong practice during the time of school closure in providing online learning for pupils, and good support for families within the community.
- The Headteacher worked quickly and effectively to put in place additional nurture provision to support vulnerable learners during their acting period in post. This was supported financially by the LA.
- The school has been supported by a Learning Network School (LNS) arrangement with both Cwrt Rawling Primary School and Blaen-y-Cwm Primary School, which has enabled improvements to be made in the quality of teaching and pupils' learning. The school has also engaged well with fortnightly EAS mathematics and STEM in-school support, as well as programmes to improve outcomes for disadvantaged youngsters and those who have had adverse childhood experiences.

Progress update:

- A formal review of progress against the recommendations of the review in 2020 will take place this Autumn term 2021, with the new Headteacher and the leadership team working collaboratively together. This will inform the identification of priorities for improvement moving forward and the school's status under the SCC arrangements.

Schools Causing Concern**The River Centre Learning Community:**

- The LA is concerned that the school does not engage with key statutory LA functions and services. The pre-warning letter of Spring 2021, which set out these concerns in detail, did not achieve the compliance required and the school was issued with a Statutory Warning Notice on 14.09.21.
- Schools Causing Concern meetings have not provided the LA or EAS with the assurance of the effectiveness of the school's blended learning provision.
- Staff at the school are now engaging in regional professional learning programmes including engagement with the Distance and Blended Learning training; Newly Qualified Teachers programme; Schools as Learning Organisations and wellbeing training.
- The EAS has supported the Governing Body with training in self-evaluation. Strengthening the Governing Body's effectiveness will continue to be a focus of support.
- Following the school's engagement in the Celebrate, Support, Share and Refine pilot, the EAS has supported with its review and development of distance and blended learning provision.
- The LNS school Ysgol Bryn Castell is supporting, with a focus on: developing an effective School Development Plan; reviewing the school's self-evaluation of teaching and learning, including distance and blended learning; mentoring of leaders; planning for the new curriculum and ALN reform. The school is engaging appropriately overall with this support.
- The school has also received increased support via additional School Improvement Partner (SIP) time, with a specific focus on self-evaluation and improvement planning.

Progress update:

- The LA and EAS will work alongside school leaders to undertake self-evaluation activity during the autumn term 2021 to evaluate provision and practice and agree priorities for improvement.
- From the outcome of the May SCC meeting, it should be noted that the engagement with the Schools Causing Concern process has been unsatisfactory.

Education Performance Indicators

Performance Indicator Description - Applications	18/19	19/20	20/21
Applications – Nursery	693	696	714
Applications – Primary	739	731	701
Applications – Secondary	677	679	696
Performance Indicator Description - Attendance	July 19	July 20	July 21
Attendance – Primary	94.4	93.5	90.7
Attendance Secondary	93.3	91.7	84.8
Performance Indicator Description - Exclusions	April 19 to March 20	April 20 to March 21	April 21 to September 21
Exclusions Primary	108	25	17
Exclusions Secondary	459	135	183
Average Number of Primary exclusions per month (no. of months in brackets)	108 (9.8)	25 (3.6)	17 (3.4)
Average Number of Secondary exclusions per month (no. of months in brackets)	459 (41.7)	135 (19.3)	183 (36.6)
Performance Indicator Description – Referrals to Social Services			
Number of referrals to Social Services for children and young people of school age (3-16)	2382	2260	1702
Average Number of referrals to Social Services for children and young people of school age (3-16) per month (no. of months in brackets)	198.5 (12)	188.3 (12)	283.7 (6)
Performance Indicator Description – Digital Disadvantage			
Number of devices provided to pupils	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,359 devices • 161 MiFi Dongles 	Under Review
Performance Indicator Description – Free School Meals	2019	2020	2021
Entitlement to FSM/Transitionally Protected (%)	21.1	24.6	30.4

Education Performance Indicators

KS4 Progress (Centre Determined Grades)

	2021				2020				2019			
	Capped 9	Literacy	Numeracy	Best Science	Capped 9	Literacy	Numeracy	Best Science	Capped 9	Literacy	Numeracy	Best Science
School 1	335.9	32.6	35.1	32.7	355.9	36.1	36.6	32.2	341	35	33	27
School 2	377.0	41.0	32.0	38.0	375.7	41.0	35.0	36.4	349	38	31	28
School 3	369.0	40.4	39.1	40.6	378.0	39.3	37.2	38.2	340	37	35	36
School 4	373.5	41.5	39.5	36.2	358.3	39.9	37.5	36.4	362	39	36	36

Improvement in performance from previous year.

Decline in performance from previous year.

Budget 2021/22 - Quarter 1 & 2 (April 2021 to September 2022)

Budget Area		Budget	Forecast	Variance	
		£	£	£	%
1	Individual Schools Budget	46,522,380	46,522,380	0	0
2	Education Improvement Grant	257,360	261,402	(4,042)	(1.57)
3	Other Costs	722,410	722,897	(487)	(0.07)
4	Supporting SEN - Schools	1,679,830	1,103,550	(77,156)	(4.59)
5	Strategic Management	2,432,410	2,243,658	188,752	7.76
6	Assuring Access to Schools	2,317,310	2,316,456	854	0.04
7	Facilitating School Improvement	419,760	407,815	11,945	2.85
8	Supporting SEN - LEA	342,470	310,763	31,707	9.26
9	Further Education & Training	133,290	121,816	11,474	8.60
10	Youth Service	311,437	298,097	13,340	4.28
11	Other Expenditure	141,030	124,748	16,282	11.55
12	Education Departmental Budget	64,323	81,685	(17,362)	(26.99)
13	Corporate Recharges	4,360,220	4,360,220	0	0
	Leisure	4,159,100	4,164,405	(5,305)	(0.13)
Grand Total		63,863,330	63,693,328	170,002	0.27

Education Risk Register

Risk Description	Quarter 1 and 2 Progress (April – September 2021)	Status
<p>CRR 4 - Safeguarding - Failure to ensure adequate safeguarding arrangements are in place for vulnerable people in Blaenau Gwent</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education, including the Youth Service, provided partial performance information for the Joint Scrutiny/Executive performance report in Q4. Due to periods of school/pupil disruption. However, full data for Q1 in 2021-22 are being collated following a full return to face to face learning in schools during the Spring/Summer terms of 2021. • The Local Government Education Services Safeguarding Policy has been updated and discussed at Joint Scrutiny Committee and was subsequently agreed by the Executive Committee in July 2021. The policy is now in line with the latest Keeping Learners Safe Guidance. • An Education Safeguarding self-evaluation has been reported to CLT and through the political processes that discusses the good progress overall, particularly the strong collaboration between Social Services and Education. The areas for further development include the roll-out of the 360-degree policy and MyConcern implementation across all schools across the County Borough in 2021-22. 	<p>Critical</p>
<p>CRR 25 - The 2 schools currently in receipt of Council Intervention fail to make appropriate progress against the Statutory Warning Notice to Improve and their Post Inspection Action Plans.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are robust governance arrangements in place between the Council and EAS to monitor both schools' performance. The two schools in an Estyn Category, namely ALC and BFS are part of the regional Schools Causing Concern arrangements and have been assessed as making satisfactory progress by the respective Schools Causing Concern Panels, but, in particular, the progress at ALC is moving towards a strong assessment. BFS is now part of the WG Multi-Agency Support for Schools in Special Measures initiative and this will replace the SCC meetings. Furthermore, the ALC Corporate Group has been re-established and the revenue financial position is improving circa £324,000 deficit at year end in 2020-21. • The reporting of Council/School level performance data has been relaxed this academic year in Wales by Welsh Government. However, Summer 2020-21 KS4 Centre Determined Grades results were in line with the targets set in both the secondary settings School Development Plans. • The review of Statutory Warning Notices will take place during the Autumn term for both ALC and BFS, with both schools in particular showing improvements in their leadership and governance arrangements. • Progress against further controls is on-going and largely on track, the forecasted direction of travel is an improving position. The Education Directorate and EAS are increasingly confident in the progress that both settings are making. 	<p>High</p>
<p>EDDRR8 - Failure to minimise the risks associated with pupil regression linked to COVID-19 learning disruption and to maximise learner progression.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The EAS pilot initiative has been completed. • The Corporate Recovery structure has been completed as well as an initial impact assessment. The action plan sits alongside key impact areas for which baseline information is currently being collated. • Professional discussions set up for every school in Blaenau Gwent with the EAS in the Autumn Term • The draft Recovery and Renewal Plan is in place, following an impact assessment process. 	<p>High</p>

Risk Description	Quarter 1 and 2 Progress (April – September 2021)	Status
EDDRR9 - Dependency on funding around ESF Inspire projects in youth service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspire 2 Achieve (I2A, 11-16 year olds) funding for delivery ends July 2022 and Inspire 2 Work (I2W, 16-24 year olds) delivery ends September 2022. Numbers of staff affected are 1 x I2A/I2W Team Manager, 13 x I2A staff (includes 1 x Team Leader, 6 school based youth workers, 4 x transition youth workers, 1 x school aged mental health youth worker, 1 x admin support) and 7 x I2W staff (includes 5 x youth workers, 2 x health and wellbeing youth workers). These posts have directly contributed to the lowest levels of NEET figures, preventing low levels of mental health from escalating and overcoming barriers to employment. • Although the LA through Environment and Regeneration is involved in discussions related to the City Deal and Shared Prosperity Funding, the outcome and timeline for these areas of funding are unclear. Furthermore, all discussions to date are focussed on future funding for unemployment programmes for adults. It is unclear whether funding will be made available for earlier interventions and support within schools and colleges. If funding is not secured beyond July 2022, transition support for those most at risk will not be in place, destinations will not be supported and will lead to NEET figures rising. These areas are monitored nationally by Welsh Government and through Estyn inspections. Processes with staff will need to begin in April 2022. • This risk was escalated to CLT who agreed for the risk to not be escalated to the Corporate Risk Register at this time owing to ongoing discussions with the Capital Region to secure UK Government Shared Prosperity Funding. 	High
EDDRR1 - Failure of schools in Blaenau Gwent to adapt and change accordingly to the requirements of the new curriculum and national agenda of the Welsh Government as laid out in the National reform agenda document "Education for Wales: Our national Mission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation delayed until January 2022. • A report has been presented to Scrutiny for assurance that the inclusion service is fit for purpose to support ALN reforms and schools. • ALN Reform Report going to Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee in Autumn term and report indicates high-level confidence that Education' Inclusion service and schools are well on track for implementation. • Termly catch up planned with Estyn to discuss activities for this term. 	Medium

Risk Description	Quarter 1 and 2 Progress (April – September 2021)	Status
<p>EDDRR4 - Failure to create a sustainable and successful Abertillery Learning Community that delivers good outcomes for learners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The authority has funded additional revenue support for ALC so that the school can take in the full range in order to increase the pupil population. • Established project group to look at capacity and physical space issues and will look to undertake an annual review. • ALC is programmed for remodelling under 21st Century Schools under the Band B Programme. • The Council recognises that ALC leadership and governing body leadership continue to improve. • The revenue out-turn position for ALC saw the revenue deficit reduce to circa £324,000 and the deficit reduction plan for 2022-23 is progressing. • Estyn monitoring visit expected in early Spring Term. 	Medium
<p>EDDRR5 - Failure to deliver an effective ICT strategy in line with the WG Education Digital Standards, which facilitates and enhances delivery aligned to the Digital Competency Framework and the new Curriculum for Wales.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Infrastructure and Connectivity Project has successfully been delivered, along with Waves 1-3 of the Hwb EdTech Programme. Wave 4 implementation is currently underway, and progressing as programmed and in line with the financial profile. • Sustainability sessions have taken place in order to inform the device refresh and replacement programme, along with the development of the ICT Strategy. As a result, school's ICT Sustainability Plans have been drafted and will be reviewed in the early part of the Spring-term 2022, for implementation in the 2022/23 financial year. • The ICT Strategy Group has been further developed and meets bi-monthly. In addition, Education regularly meet with SRS, WG and Corporate colleagues, in order to ensure effective alignment between service delivery, strategic planning and policy. • Very good progress has been made in line with the development of the Education ICT Strategy, which is scheduled for consultation in the Spring-term 2022, and implementation from September 2022. • The Website/PSA issues continue to be subject to daily monitoring and escalation processes, with school's connectivity having been negatively affected – particularly during the latter part of the Autumn-term 2021. These issues have been escalated to the highest level, with WG having produced an action plan to address them. An effective communications plan is in place, which has been developed in partnership with SRS and neighbouring authorities, to ensure that schools are in receipt of up to date information in order to aid planning, engagement and delivery. • Delivery and monitoring of the digitally disadvantaged learner device programme is ongoing, with all requests to date having been successfully met. 	Medium

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is continued engagement with school's via headteachers, regarding both the projects and individual school needs. • Device and infrastructure audits have been undertaken for all schools and are update annually, meaning that the Council, SRS and schools have an excellent working knowledge of provision. 	
EDDRR10 - Failure of school (RC) to improve following the issue of a pre-warning notice and statutory warning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership and Governors being provided with support and work undertaken with chair and vice chairs to better understand their role. • School has been issued with statutory warning notice (14th September) as it failed to improve in line with the pre warning notice. • LA has reviewed and clarified its admissions procedures with the school. • SCC meetings half termly. 	High

Glossary

ALC – Abertillery Learning Community

ALN – Additional Learning Needs

ALT – Aneurin Leisure Trust

BFS – Brynmawr Foundation School

CAGs – Centre Assessed Grades

CDGs – Centre Determined Grades

CLT – Corporate Leadership Team

CSSR – Celebrate, Support, Share and Refine

EAS – Education Achievement Service

eFSM – eligible for Free School Meals

EIP – Education Improvement Plan

ESF – European Social Fund

EWC – Education Workforce Council

KS – Key Stage

LA – Local Authority

LGES

LSOA – Lower Super Output Area

NEET – Not in Education, Employment or Training

RPIs – Restricted Physical Interventions

SCC – Schools Causing Concern

SE – Self-Evaluation

SEBD – Social, Emotional, Behavioural Difficulties

SER – Self-Evaluation Report

SDP – School Development Plan

SOP – Strategic Outline Plan

WBL – Work Based Learning

FADE – Self Evaluation (Focus, Analysis, Do, Evaluation)

FWPs – Forward Work Programmes

GAVO – Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations

I2A – Inspire to Achieve

I2W – Inspire to Work

WIMD – Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation

WG – Welsh Government

Contact Details

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Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol

Blaenau Gwent

County Borough Council

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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: **26th January 2022**

Report Subject: **Education Directorate – Recovery and Renewal Plan**

Portfolio Holder: **Executive Member of Education, Cllr. Joanne Collins**

Report Submitted by: **Corporate Director of Education, Lynn Phillips,
Head of School Improvement and Inclusion, Luisa
Munro-Morris and Service Manager - Education
Transformation and Business Change, Claire Gardner**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
09.12.21	23.12.21	13.01.22			26.01.22	02.03.22		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Members with the opportunity to scrutinise the updated Recovery and Renewal Action Plan (Appendix 3), and the updated One Page Overview (Appendix 4), which address the Education Directorate's identified priorities for recovery and renewal, as part of the corporate response to the COVID-19 situation.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 Members will be aware that the Corporate Director of Education provides a verbal update to Scrutiny Committee regarding the response to the COVID-19 emergency. In addition, Education has reported on key outcomes, challenges and implications at each stage of the response, including the re-purposing and subsequent reopening of schools.
- 2.2 This report provides an overview of progress made during the planning phase of Education recovery, along with information on identified priorities for recovery and renewal. The draft recovery and renewal plan continues to be a working document, which outlines how the Council will continue to support schools, both during and beyond the pandemic. The One Page Overview has been updated to reflect the key recovery indicator. Changes to the documents have been highlighted in yellow for ease of reference. It is, however, highly likely that we will continue to move between alert levels and thus response and recovery throughout the remainder of this and the next academic year. Therefore, an effective approach to business continuity at each level is required. This is dealt with via the development and review of local COVID-19 Education Guidance document, operational plans and risk assessments. It is also a key feature of the aforementioned plan. An alert level information paper has been produced, which details the operational implications and changes at each stage (please refer to **Appendix 1** for more information).

2.3 Impact Assessment

Until the latter part of Spring-term, the Education Directorate was firmly focused on working with and supporting schools to continue to effectively adapt and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. A significant shift in practice, delivery and learning has occurred throughout the course of the pandemic, affecting every aspect of education and all associated provision. Therefore, in order to inform the development of a recovery and renewal plan, the Education Directorate undertook a detailed Impact Assessment to identify key impacts on education from the COVID-19 emergency. Each impact has been RAG rated to measure its seriousness. The following impacts have been identified (please refer to **Appendix 2** for more information):

- 2.4
- **Learners** - Education, social, emotional, physical and mental health implications (short and long-term).
 - **Vulnerable learners** - For those with disabilities and additional needs, provision and processes have been restricted.
 - **School staff** - Professional development, social, emotional, physical/mental health and general wellbeing in line with the need to adapt to blended learning.
 - **Childcare** - After school and pre-school provision which has been reduced and/or is not available due to COVID restrictions. Rhythm of School Day is a Welsh Government scheme that schools have been invited to express an interest in being part of. The scheme supports extra-curriculum activities either before or after school, with a focus on developing literacy and numeracy skills.
 - **Education staff training** - Staff training needs aligned to operations are not all currently adapted to be delivered online e.g. first aid.
 - **Education assets and site management** - Statutory functions, testing and inspection (Health and Safety, Fire Risk Assessment, maintenance and site management, ventilation), operations are regularly reviewed in line with the latest guidance and governed by risk assessments
 - **School operations** – Catering, cleaning and access to school sites, movement in and around the school, trips and visits, visitors, refuse, PPE and resources are all under continual review. Changes to statutory functions and regulations which affect school operation e.g. school admissions. ICT infrastructure and devices. Home to school and post 16 transport operations, have been restricted, reconfigured and subject to detailed risk assessment.
 - **School support services** - School support service operation i.e. Educational Psychology, ALN, Social Services etc. Human Resource management processes and engagement via OD are now online focused, but will require review to support effective school operations that were paused due to COVID. EAS support for schools has transitioned to online with a deficit to levels of engagement and to the brokerage of relevant support at all levels e.g. Learning Network Schools (LNS) arrangements.
 - **School accountability services** - EAS Challenge Advisors have not been able to hold schools to account and school's data monitoring has been suspended. Estyn has suspended school inspections resulting in

risks to school progress – particularly those in a category, who are in a category for longer than planned.

- **School leadership** - School governance has been adapted online, therefore, the evidence base is largely restricted to Headteacher report and narrative.
- **Poverty** - Family entitlement to benefits has increased across Blaenau Gwent and the region, including free school meals. Additional funding has been allocated to support these families, however, many schemes are not sustainable and so the ongoing impact will need to be assessed.
- **School community** - Limited face to face contact and the shift to online engagement has challenged communication and relationships.
- **School development** - School development plans have had to be largely adapted in order to react to COVID-19.
- **Safeguarding** - School closure has meant that children and young people have had limited access to on-site school support e.g. adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). Service support intelligence and capability has been restricted. Vulnerable adults are more exposed to risk factors with limited access to support services.
- **Voluntary/Third Sector/ Charities work and engagement** - Activities have been restricted significantly due to operational implications associated with COVID-19. Members have both recognised the pressures and supported both education and schools throughout the pandemic, need to continue to develop this work.
- **Preventative health measures** - School-based preventative strategies to support healthcare needs of pupils have either been stopped or largely disrupted by COVID-19 i.e. vaccinations, growth and development checks, dental health, period equity etc.
- **COVID-19 control measures** - LA's and schools have implemented a series of control measures in order to manage community health i.e. vaccinations, Lateral flow tests, use of PPE, positive case management and risk assessment.
- **Improved school-to-school partnership working** – need to ensure this continues and is further developed.
- **Significant progress in professional development of staff, and upskilling of pupils e.g. IT/blended learning** – need to ensure this continues and is further developed.
- **Streamlining of services and operations in line with emergency response has been really positive and this has supported schools to provide continuity** - need to ensure this continues and is further developed.

2.5 The impact assessment process provided the opportunity for reflection and review, learning from which has been taken forward to inform recovery and renewal priorities and planning. The relationship between the Council and its schools is stronger than ever before. Our aim is to create a shared purpose and associated plan to address key priorities for the future of Education within Blaenau Gwent. The shared purpose is framed on 'Better Schools, Better Citizens and Better Communities'.

2.6 Recovery – Priorities

The Education Directorate's Recovery and Renewal plans are in line with the corporate approach led by the Director of Regeneration and Community Services. It needs to be acknowledged that the impact of the last 18 months on all aspects of our school communities, and in particular the disruption to teaching and learning, is far reaching. Recovery will need to be planned in the short, medium and long term for learner development and progression. The Education Directorate's top priority in the EAS business plan is to;

- 2.7 *Minimise the impact of COVID-19 on learner development and progress, including improving the digital competency of all learners and staff in the wider Blaenau Gwent school community.*

2.8 Renewal – Priorities

Through schools having to adapt to new ways of working, a number of positive outcomes have been evidenced. The Education Directorate will work with relevant stakeholders, including schools and the EAS, to use these outcomes to shape new ways of working across the Education Directorate and throughout the school estate. The core purpose of all schools in Blaenau Gwent will be to provide excellent learning and teaching for all our learners, but this will not mean a return to doing things as they were pre-pandemic, but to using the experience of the pandemic to shape education provision as we move forward.

2.9 Next Steps and Progress

- Impact assessment completed.
- Key measures to indicate progress identified (**Appendix 4**).
- Baseline and data collection on key measures, from September 2021.
- Recovery and Renewal targets set, September 2021.
- Established protocol September 2021 to support schools under current Operational Guidance.
- School Operations Management Group continues to meet monthly.
- Curriculum Reform and Recovery and Renewal groups set up from September 2021 and now working effectively to ensure a strategic approach to the delivery of the Recovery and Renewal Plan.
- Detailed action plan for each impact area to be shared with relevant stakeholders:
 - Shared and discussed with the Youth Service October 2021
 - Shared and discussed with headteachers October 2021, November 2021 and December 2021
- A Headteacher working group has been set up with 6 schools, starting January 2022. Recovery and Renewal, and the theme of 'building back better' will be a key part of the work of this group.

3. Options for Recommendation

- 3.1 This report has been discussed by Education DMT and CLT prior to submission to Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee.

- **Option 1** – Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee considers and accepts the report, associated documentation and proposed course of action.
 - **Option 2** – Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee provide comments in relation to improvements that can be made in relation to the associated documentation and proposed course of action.
4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**
- 4.1 Education is a strategic priority and key to facilitating effective delivery of the Corporate Plan.
- 4.2 One of the objectives in the Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan is for every child to have the best start in life. The Council seeks to ensure that provision is appropriate and able to meet the needs of children and young people, so that their progress is in line with ambitious expectations. This is particularly pertinent in an emergency crisis situation.
- 4.3 There are both statutory and regulatory functions and responsibilities associated with Education. The recovery and renewal plan is an essential component in securing effective and compliant delivery.
5. **Implications Against Each Option**
- 5.1 **Impact on Budget**
There are no direct financial implications associated with this report, however, it should be noted that the impact of the COVID-19 emergency response on both Council and school revenue budgets is being closely monitored. The school balances have increased and the overall Education portfolio had a favourable position at year-end for financial year 2020-21.
- 5.2 **Risk including Mitigating Actions**
There are two strategic risks associated with this report:
1. The impact of COVID-19 on learner progression and pupil regression. This is being mitigated through the Council, EAS and Schools working in collaboration to support learners across the board; and,
 2. The risks associated with the provision of safe learning environments to minimise the potential transmission of COVID. There are comprehensive risk assessments in place to mitigate the risks, but the situation is constantly under review and appropriate remedial action is taken e.g. self-isolation protocols are implemented.
- 5.3 **Legal**
This report provides information relating to the emergency response requirements as well as the specific Education obligations set out in the School Standards and Organisation Act Wales (2013) to support strategic and operational activity to improve pupil outcomes and wellbeing.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

Education is in the process of mapping existing and required datasets (both qualitative and quantitative), analysis of which will inform planning and performance. The two lead officers are working closely with the Policy and Performance team and the Corporate Recovery Group, to develop performance indicators which will be used to monitor and report on progress.

6.2 **Expected outcome for the public**

There is a commitment from the Council and its schools to provide quality education for our children and young people to improve their life chances, despite the challenges faced during the emergency crisis.

6.3 **Involvement**

There has been extensive involvement of key stakeholder both corporately and across the school estate. The planning groups for secondary, primary and special schools that are established, including Headteacher representation has secured a collaborative and corporate response. This collaborative approach will continue throughout the recovery and renewal period.

6.4 **Thinking for the Long term**

This report largely reflects on the emergency response to date, however, there are robust governance arrangements in place to support the next stages of the emergency for the foreseeable future.

6.5 **Preventative focus**

The Council's emergency response has facilitated a preventative approach to minimising the transmission of the COVID-19 virus.

6.6 **Collaboration / partnership working**

The report outlines the significant amount of partnership working at a strategic and operational level. This has resulted in a strengthening of the working relationships between the Council, schools and other key partners.

6.7 **Integration**

The emergency response has been a 'One Council' approach.

6.8 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***

Any physical works planned and undertaken within education settings are planned in order to take account of decarbonisation and reducing carbon emissions.

6.9a ***Socio Economic Duty Impact Assessment***

The existing impact assessment and action plan was created prior to the socio-economic duty commencing. However, an assessment will be carried out in relation to each priority area during the autumn-term review process.

6.9b **EqIA**

The application of EqIA's to each priority has been considered as part of the Education impact assessment process. EqIA's will be undertaken in line with development and implementation of the recovery and renewal plan.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 The report will be presented to the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee and then subsequently through to the Executive Committee for monitoring purposes.

Background Documents / Electronic Links

Appendix 1 – Alert Level Implications

Appendix 2 – Education Directorate Impact Assessment

Appendix 3 – Draft Recovery and Renewal Action Plan

Appendix 4 – Education Recovery One Page Overview

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Welsh Government Alert Level Response and Associated Implications for School

Alert Level One – Low Risk

- Schools will be fully operational in line with their COVID Secure Risk Assessment with limited impact upon overall business continuity
- Sports Centres will be open for use under an agreement with schools
- Individual risk assessments will be in place for vulnerable staff and pupils, to support them to continue to access school-sites
- Monitoring of school-based incidence rates will take place on a daily basis
- Sufficient staff will be in place to facilitate the delivery of education, along with all statutory and wider education functions
- School support functions including transport, will be fully operational under a COVID Secure Risk Assessment
- Local Authority multi-departmental support and engagement will be carried out on a regular basis
- Local Authority Guidance documents will be in place in respect of both operations and human resources

Alert Level Two – Medium Risk

- Schools will be fully operational in line with their COVID Secure Risk Assessment, with the exception of breakfast and afterschool clubs which will cease operation, along with other associated recreational activity
- Overall business continuity is likely to be impacted, with a reduction in non-essential business
- Sports Centres will be open for use under an agreement with schools
- School operations including the management and use of resources throughout the school will be reviewed
- School site access restrictions will be in place
- Individual risk assessments will be in place for vulnerable staff and pupils
- Additional monitoring measures will be in place to establish and address COVID-19 incidence rates in both pupil and staff populations
- Staff and pupil numbers are likely to fluctuate aligned to self-isolation and increased incidence of COVID-19, with decreasing staff and pupil populations
- Classes and year groups (including associated school staff, support staff and visitor contacts) are likely to be required to self-isolate
- School support staff self-isolation is also more likely i.e. caretaking, catering, cleaning, transport, school crossing patrol staff etc. affecting the delivery of key support services
- Supply staff may be required to cover the delivery of education
- The delivery of education may be impacted, with the need to introduce partial remote learning measures within affected class and/or year groups
- School-based operations will require review on a school-by-school basis based in line with the findings of contact tracing, e.g. the schools COVID Secure Risk Assessment and associated mitigation measures are likely to require review
- Increased Local Authority multi-departmental support and engagement may be required
- There is a potential for increased demand for both the Occupational Health and Employee Assistance Programmes

- Local Authority guidance documents will be in place for both operations and staff, requiring review at regular intervals

Alert Level Three – High Risk

- School-based operation is likely to decrease in line with COVID Secure Risk Assessment. Breakfast and afterschool clubs, along other associated recreational activity will cease to operate
- Overall business continuity will be impacted with further reductions in services, provision and site-based work
- Sports Centres will be open for use under an agreement with schools, with restricted use likely to affect the delivery of physical education to varying degrees (on a school by school basis)
- School operations including the management and use of resources throughout the school will be reviewed and reduced accordingly
- School site access restrictions will be in place ensuring that only essential visitors are able to access school buildings
- Individual risk assessments for vulnerable staff and pupils are likely to require review
- Increased monitoring measures will be in place to identify and manage increased COVID-19 incidence rates in both pupil and staff populations
- Staff and pupil numbers are likely to decrease aligned to self-isolation and increased incidence of COVID-19
- There will be an increased need to address pupil/family support requirements outside of standard operating procedures, i.e. increased Social and other related service support, digital exclusion, entitlement to free school meals etc.
- Possible increase in staff absence linked to health and welfare
- Classes and Year Groups (including staff) are likely to be required to self-isolate, along with partial and/or full temporary school closures, where it is no longer viable to operate safely
- The school closure protocol will come into effect (i.e. consideration of the ability to fulfil first aid, emergency planning, supervision, support for ALN etc. and to carry out statutory functions)
- In the event of a school closure, consideration will be given to furloughing staff in line with the established criteria
- School support staff self-isolation is highly likely i.e. catering, cleaning, transport, school crossing patrol staff etc. affecting the delivery of key support services
- Higher numbers of supply staff are likely to be required to cover the delivery of education
- Delivery of education is highly likely to be impacted, with the need to move to partial and/or full remote learning
- School-based operations will require review on a school-by-school basis in line with the findings of contact tracing e.g. the schools COVID Secure Risk Assessment and mitigation measures will require review. The introduction of additional control measures is likely to be required, such as the habitual wearing of PPE in classrooms by staff (this falls outside of the WG School Operational Guidance)
- Increased Local Authority multi-departmental support and engagement will be required more frequently
- There will be a higher level of demand and impact upon Occupational Health and Employee Assistance Programmes

- Local Authority Guidance documents for both operations and staff will require frequent review

Alert Level Four – Very High Risk

- School-based operation is likely to decrease significantly in line with COVID Secure Risk Assessment and review processes. Breakfast and afterschool clubs, along other associated recreational activity, will cease operation
- Overall business continuity will be significantly impacted with services, provision and site-based work being focused on essential and statutory activity/requirements
- Sports Centres will be closed which will impact upon the availability of use by schools and ultimately the delivery of physical education to varying degrees
- School operations including the management and use of resources throughout the school will be reviewed and reduced
- School site access restrictions will be in place ensuring that only essential visitors are able to access school buildings
- Individual risk assessments for vulnerable staff and pupils will require review
- Significantly increased monitoring measures will be in place associated with pupil and staff numbers, including out of hours and duty arrangements
- Staff and pupil numbers will frequently fluctuate aligned to self-isolation and increased incidence of COVID-19, with significant impact expected upon both staff and pupil populations
- There will be an increased need to address pupil/family support requirements outside of standard operating procedure i.e. increased Social and other related service support, digital exclusion, entitlement to free school meals etc.
- There is likely to be an increase in staff absence linked to both health and welfare
- Classes and Year Groups (including staff) will be required to self-isolate, along with partial and/or full temporary school closures associated with a health and safety assessment and where it is no longer viable to operate safely
- School closure protocol comes into effect more frequently (i.e. first aid, emergency planning, supervision, support for ALN etc. along with the ability to carry out statutory functions)
- In the event of a school closure, consideration can be given to furloughing staff where applicable, in line with the established criteria
- School support staff self-isolation will be required i.e. caretaking, catering, cleaning, transport, school crossing patrol etc. affecting the delivery of key support services
- Higher numbers of supply staff will be required to cover the delivery of education (if available and if the school remains open)
- Delivery of education will be impacted, with the need to move to partially and/or fully remote learning
- School-based operations will require review on a school-by-school basis based on the findings of contact tracing e.g. the schools COVID Secure Risk Assessment and mitigation measures will require review with the introduction of additional control measures such as the habitual wearing of PPE in classrooms by staff (this falls outside of the WG School Operational Guidance).
- Increased Local Authority multi-departmental support and engagement will be required more frequently
- Full school closure may be required over a prolonged period, with the requirement to establish provision for vulnerable and key worker children

- Increased impact and demand upon Occupational Health and Employee Assistance Programmes
- Local Authority Guidance documents in place for both operations and staff – reviewed more frequently

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Education Impact Assessment

Impact Area	*RAG	Key Impacts	Identified Needs / Actions	Responsible
Learners	Amber	Impact of missed time in school – education, social, emotional, physical and mental health implications (short and long-term).	<p>Develop a recovery and renewal plan with a focus on education and wellbeing.</p> <p>Link with national and regional priorities.</p> <p>Undertake stakeholder engagement to facilitate learning from experience, and renewal of practice.</p> <p>Partnership work with the EAS to broker support in line with the EAS Business Plan.</p>	Head of School Improvement and Inclusion
Vulnerable learners	Red	<p>Impact of missed time in school – education, social, emotional, physical and mental health.</p> <p>For those with disabilities and additional needs, provision and processes have been restricted.</p>	<p>Develop recovery and renewal plan with a focus on provision for vulnerable learners.</p> <p>Link with national and regional priorities.</p> <p>Undertake stakeholder engagement to facilitate learning from experience, and renewal of practice.</p> <p>Partnership work with Social Services, Health and Safety and the EAS to broker support.</p>	Head of School Improvement and Inclusion

*R – significant impact; A – moderate impact; G – no or limited impact

School staff	Amber	<p>Impact of missed time in school – professional development, social, emotional, physical/mental health and general wellbeing in line with the need to adapt to blended learning.</p> <p>Staff childcare implications relating to school closure.</p> <p>LA's and schools have been required to establish and implement control and safety measures to support clinically vulnerable staff. This has impacted upon both staff and school operations.</p> <p>For those with disabilities and additional needs, provision and processes have been restricted.</p>	<p>Develop recovery and renewal plan</p> <p>Link with national and regional priorities.</p> <p>Undertake stakeholder engagement to facilitate learning from experience, and renewal of practice.</p> <p>Partnership work with OD, Health & Safety and the EAS to broker support.</p>	Head of School Improvement and Inclusion
Childcare	Red	After school and pre-school provision which has been reduced and/or is not available due to COVID restrictions	Childcare operational plans and risk assessments to be reviewed and monitored by the Childcare Sub-group.	Service Manager - ET and BC
Staff training	Red	Staff training needs aligned to operations are not all currently adapted to be delivered online i.e. first aid and RPI	Training plan review in partnership with Health and Safety and OD colleagues.	Head of School Improvement and Inclusion/ Service Manager -ET and BC
Education assets and site management	Amber	Statutory functions, testing and inspection (Health and Safety, Fire Risk Assessment, maintenance and site management, ventilation), operations are regularly reviewed in line with the latest guidance and governed by risk assessments	<p>Review school operational plans and WG guidance to inform priorities and changes to local guidance and operations.</p> <p>Review guidance and associated policy, risk assessment and operational plan bi-monthly, in partnership</p>	Service Manager - ET and BC

*R – significant impact; A – moderate impact; G – no or limited impact

			with Health and Safety and the Technical Working Group.	
School operations	Red/Amber	<p>Catering, cleaning, access to school sites, movement in and around the school, trips and visits, visitors, refuse, PPE and resources are all under continual review. These areas are subject to risk assessment and reduced operation in line with the COVID alert level implementation. Changes to the school day have been implemented throughout the school estate to support staggered start and finish times.</p> <p>Changes to statutory functions and regulations which affect school operation e.g. school admissions.</p> <p>ICT infrastructure, devices, access to resources, systems and software for both pupils and staff in line with digital exclusion and blended learning are continually reviewed to support inclusion.</p> <p>Home to school and post 16 transport operations, have been restricted, reconfigured and subject to detailed risk assessment.</p>	<p>Operational plan to be monitored, provision, guidance and policy to be adapted accordingly.</p> <p>Regular monitoring required as above</p> <p>ICT Plan and associated strategy to be developed in partnership with SRS and the ICT Strategy Group.</p> <p>Monthly review in line with the latest regulations. Procurement and operations review</p>	Service Manager ET and BC
School support services	Red	<p>School support service operation i.e. Educational Psychology, ALN, Social Services etc. has been prohibited due to lack of access, which has affected pupil and family engagement and progress.</p> <p>Transition at all phases has been affected by key support services having restricted/no access to schools.</p> <p>Human Resource management processes and engagement via OD are now online focused, but will require review to support effective school operations that were paused due to COVID.</p>	<p>Inclusion Service review to be undertaken.</p> <p>Transition to be developed.</p> <p>Work with OD to undertake an impact associated and establish an operational plan around schools.</p>	Head of School Improvement and Inclusion/ Service Manager ET and BC

*R – significant impact; A – moderate impact; G – no or limited impact

		<p>Wellbeing support services require monitoring in terms of access and uptake.</p> <p>Additional insurance and financial implications for schools as a result of the pandemic.</p> <p>EAS support for schools has transitioned to online with a deficit to levels of engagement and to the brokerage of relevant support at all levels e.g. LNS Schools.</p>	<p>Working with Finance and Insurance colleagues to undertake an impact assessment, in order to inform future planning.</p>	
School accountability services	Red	<p>EAS Challenge Advisors have not been able to hold schools to account and school's data monitoring has been suspended.</p> <p>Esytyn has suspended inspection resulting in risks to school – particularly those in a category, who are in for longer than planned.</p>	<p>Review EAS Business Plan in line with WG regulations and guidance.</p> <p>Multi-agency partnership working with Estyn in order to support schools causing concern.</p>	Head of School Improvement and Inclusion
School leadership	Amber	<p>School governance has been adapted online, therefore, the evidence base is largely restricted to Headteacher report and narrative.</p> <p>Support for current and new school leaders has been limited to online, and school to school working opportunities have mainly focused on wellbeing and operational issues.</p>	<p>Work with the EAS to review current practice for governance and school leadership.</p>	Head of School Improvement and Inclusion
Poverty	Red	<p>Family entitlement to benefits has increased across Blaenau Gwent and the region, including free school meals. Additional funding has been allocated to support these families, however, many schemes are not sustainable and so the ongoing impact will need to be assessed.</p>	<p>Working with Finance and Benefits colleagues to undertake an impact assessment, in order to inform future planning.</p>	Service Manager ET and BC/ Head of School Improvement and Inclusion
School community	Red	<p>Limited face to face contact and the shift to online engagement has challenged communication and relationships.</p>	<p>Provide support for individual schools to address barriers to parent engagement in partnership with the EAS.</p>	Head of School Improvement and Inclusion

*R – significant impact; A – moderate impact; G – no or limited impact

School development	Amber	School development plans have had to be largely adapted in order to react to COVID-19.	Provide support for individual schools to address barriers to parent engagement in partnership with the EAS.	Head of School Improvement and Inclusion
Safeguarding - children	Red	School closure has meant that children and young people are at greater risk of harm e.g. adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). Service support intelligence and capability has been restricted.	Supporting Schools to ensure that they are able to effectively identify and manage risks, via structure an effective multi-agency approach.	Head of School Improvement and Inclusion/ Service Manager ET and BC
Safeguarding - adults	Red	Vulnerable adults are more exposed to risk factors with limited access to support services.	Supporting Schools to ensure that they are able to effectively identify and manage risks, via structure an effective multi-agency approach.	Head of School Improvement and Inclusion/ Service Manager ET and BC
Voluntary/Third Sector/ Charities work and engagement	Red	Opportunities to engage partners have been restricted significantly due to operational implications associated with COVID-19.	Establish a stakeholder re-engagement and support plan for Education and schools.	Head of School Improvement and Inclusion/ Service Manager ET and BC
Preventative health measures	Red	School-based preventative strategies to support healthcare needs of pupils have either been stopped or largely disrupted by COVID-19 i.e. vaccinations, growth and development checks, dental health, period equity etc.	Work closely with ABUHB, Public Health Wales and associated partners to review and develop a school health plan .	Head of School Improvement and Inclusion/Service Manager ET and BC
COVID control measures	Amber	LA's and schools have implemented a series of control measures in order to manage community health i.e. vaccinations, Lateral flow tests, use of PPE, positive case management and risk assessment.	Review and evaluate existing control measures in line with the latest guidance, regulations and associated operational plans, in order to inform business continuity planning.	Service Manager ET and BC/Health and Safety

*R – significant impact; A – moderate impact; G – no or limited impact

Review of Implementation - Areas that have worked well				
Relationships and Engagement with headteachers	Green	Throughout the course of the pandemic relationships, communication and engagement with school leaders has improved significantly. School leaders have had the opportunity to work together with the Council, shaping provision and informing key developments throughout the response period. In addition, they have been empowered to share and seek solutions to issues which have emerged, whilst working closely with the Council to achieve consistency in delivery methods etc.	Continue with the current engagement format to aid recover and ensure effective engagement and participation opportunities are in place for/with school leaders	Head of School Improvement and Inclusion/ Service Manager ET and BC
Digital inclusion	Amber	Throughout the course of the pandemic both Welsh Government and the Council have worked to secure and invest in devices and connectivity to address digital disadvantage. As a result, there is now an improved understanding of the level of digital disadvantage throughout the school estate. In addition, there are established methods and solutions by which the impact of digital disadvantage can be addressed.	Ensure a full review of provision and requirements takes place, to aid device/provision sustainability plans in line with the Education ICT Strategy and blended learning developments.	Service Manager ET and BC/ Head of School Improvement and Inclusion
Business continuity – service design and delivery	Amber	Both schools and associated Council services have established effective service design and delivery models, along with business continuity arrangements, ensuring effective response to the pandemic.	Continue to review operational and business continuity plans, to ensure that alert level response and associated delivery can be managed effectively.	Service Manager ET and BC
Learners	Amber	Many pupils have developed skills through engaging with distance learning e.g. resilience and time management.	Continue to build on these skills in a face-to-face setting, ensure schools provide catch up support for pupils who have not developed such skills/not engaged well with distance learning	Head of School Improvement and Inclusion
Teaching staff	Amber	Many teachers and teaching assistants have developed their use of ICT to deliver learning, many schools have used ICT in creative and engaging ways to encourage, motivate and support learning.	Continue to build on these skills in a face-to-face setting. Work with the EAS to ensure blended learning continues to	Head of School Improvement and Inclusion

*R – significant impact; A – moderate impact; G – no or limited impact

			be a key priority in school development planning	
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RECOVERY AND RENEWAL
BLAENAU GWENT ACTION PLAN Summer 2021 – Summer 2022

Priority 1: Learner and staff Wellbeing

Responsibility	Action	Resources (Specific no. of days/costs)	Timescale (Start/End)	Success Criteria	Monitoring and evaluation arrangements for actions (date)	Termly Updates
HoS/la and SMETBC	<p>Undertake stakeholder engagement to facilitate learning from experience, and renewal of practice.</p> <p><u>Stakeholder Recovery and Renewal Group</u></p> <p>Monthly engagement with primary and secondary headteachers to shape support for recovery and renewal</p>	Monthly meetings	July 2021 - ongoing	All stakeholders engaged, represented and informed	Report to DMT/CLT and Scrutiny/Executive as part of FWP.	Meetings continue to take place on a monthly basis, with September's session having to be re-arranged to accommodate partners, next meeting October
	<p><u>Focus Groups</u></p>	As required (led by education)	June 2021 January 2022 (6 months pending review) – ongoing	All stakeholders engaged, represented and informed	Report to DMT/CLT and Scrutiny/Executive as part of FWP.	<p>The following meetings have taken place to date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Return to schools – September • Risk Assessments and Operational Guidance • Track and Trace Processes • Breakfast Club • Cyber Security

	<p><u>Headteacher Working Groups</u> A headteacher working group inclusive of primary, special, secondary and all through settings (from January 2022), to look at 3 key strands of work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ALN reform • Curriculum reform • Renewal 	Fortnightly meetings. Each school will be given £2,500 to support with any cover arrangements or other potential costs associated with engagement	January 2022 for two terms initially	Blaenau Gwent approach to these key areas of work, accompanied by a development plan and reported via the Council's political processes.	Report to DMT/CLT and Scrutiny/Executive	Recruitment and selection of school representatives has taken place
HoSlal	<p><u>Whole school wellbeing and mental health support</u> Evaluate current provision within Inclusion team to support school's wellbeing and mental health. Exploration of different support strategies to provide a BG model e.g. Trauma Informed Schools</p>	Meetings with all relevant stakeholders	October - ongoing	Schools have provision in place to support learner's wellbeing	Report to DMT/CLT and Scrutiny/Executive	Next meeting with Caroline Friend re: TIS in September
HoSlal and SMETBC	<p><u>Further develop partnership working and re-establish pre-Covid referral systems and interventions</u> e.g. healthy schools, Post-16 partnership, youth</p>	Attendance at relevant meetings	July 2021 - onwards	Partnership working developed to support pupil wellbeing across all educational	Report to DMT/CLT and Scrutiny/Executive. Share good practice across EAS.	<p>Joint planning with healthy schools to provide training for schools on respect and tolerance</p> <p>Work has been undertaken with the Policy and Partnerships team to undertake an Equality Action</p>

	service, education transformation, social services			settings. Develop cross partnership BG agreed ways of working		Plan review on a school by school basis
Priority 2: Vulnerable Learners						
Responsibility	Action	Resources (Specific no. of days/costs)	Timescale (Start/End)	Success Criteria	Monitoring and evaluation arrangements for actions (date)	Termly Updates
SMETBC	Digitally disadvantaged learners continue to access devices/MI-FI	Licensing and revenue costs funded by WG and LA. Going forward, these costs will be addressed via schools	Ongoing	All digitally disadvantaged learners in BG have access to devices/MI- FI as required	Weekly monitoring is in place coordinated by Education, in partnership with SRS and schools. An evaluation and review is currently underway, to inform plans and provision going forward.	All schools have sufficient devices to facilitate the provision. 1,359 devices and 161 Mi-Fi units have been distributed to date. Schools will be required to fund any renewal/additional licences and connectivity from January 2022.
SMETBC	Continued support for pupils and families eligible for FSM via direct payments	WG funding	Ongoing	All eligible families receive payments for isolation and holidays	Half-term monitoring and fortnightly reporting via the SitRep	We currently provide payments in line with isolation and holiday periods. Presently, there are approximately 2,500 pupils eligible for direct payments, with application rounds re-opened once every half-term.
SMETBC	<u>Re-establishment of Breakfast Clubs with a pilot scheme until the end of October</u>	Time for meetings	March 21 – ongoing	Pilot in place, with aim to reintroduce BC	Review of BC provision with schools	Breakfast club was re-introduced during the Autumn Term for existing registrants only. The provision is subject to regular review.

SMETBC	<u>Proposal to increase capacity of Pen y Cwm has been approved by Executive Committee, and first phase completed. Second phase to be completed by next Autumn term</u>	Consultation process, meetings with architects, school leaders etc.	Summer 21 – ongoing	Pen y Cwm able to meet the needs of learners in BG	Report to DMT/CLT and Scrutiny/Executive	Phase 1 works are complete. Phase 2 works are in development, with the design process underway. In addition, the long-term planning process has been initiated in partnership with Planning, Estates and Technical Services etc.
HoSlal	<u>Realignment of ALN SLA and EP Service</u> Revised support offer to schools based on school-improving system. Schools to be provided with one offer to access whole school training to support vulnerable learners	Time for meeting with PyC staff	Summer 21 – ongoing	ALN SLA revised in line with new ALN Bill	Report to DMT/CLT and Scrutiny/Executive	Engagement with all relevant services – revised offer to schools to be sent October 21. There is a meeting January 2022 to re-launch the ALN Service/offer – now called the Outreach Service
HoSlal, Gill Smith, Finance	<u>Analysis of funding to support vulnerable learners</u>	Meeting with Finance and GS. Engagement with stakeholders	October 21	Schools able to best support ALN pupils, within budget	Report to DMT/CLT and Scrutiny/Executive	Meeting with finance set up for October 2021 A proposal has been put to School Budget Forum – November 2021
HoSlal	<u>Review of Inclusion Service /ALN Reform</u>	Meetings with all relevant stakeholders	September 21 – August 22	Inclusion service able to meet needs of ALN Bill	Report to DMT/CLT and Scrutiny/Executive	As above re: service review. Now within implementation phase statutory as of January 2022. Ongoing work with Tredgar Comprehensive School to support

HoSlal and Lisa Adams	<u>Review of EHE Policy and practices</u>	Meetings with relevant stakeholders. Support from Tredegar Comp	June 21 – August 22	Updated Policy to meet needs of EHE learners	Report to DMT/CLT and Scrutiny/Executive	schools with statutory changes and legislation Policy in place and shared with schools
SMETBC/HoSlal	<u>Intimate Care Needs Policy – review Policy</u>	Meetings with relevant stakeholders.	January 2022 onwards	Updated policy	Report to DMT/CLT and Scrutiny/Executive	Initial planning meetings have been undertaken, with the formal review process set to commence in January 2022.
SMETBC	<u>Accessibility Strategy</u>	Time to review policy/strategy	July 21 – Spring/Summer 22	Policy and strategy updated	Monthly monitoring in place, via Accessibility Action plan	Updated timeline and action plan have been taken via the Council's political processes. The review process has commenced, along with the development of the tender documents aligned to detailed accessibility audits of each school.
HoSlal	<u>Equalities training and support for schools</u>	Meetings to agree agenda and set up training	October 21	Schools able to support vulnerable learners		Training for all schools set up for October 20 th 2021. Individual support for schools since November 2021

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Priority 3: Academic Progress

Responsibility	Action	Resources (Specific no. of days/costs)	Timescale (Start/End)	Success Criteria	Monitoring and evaluation arrangements for actions (date)	Monthly Updates
HoSlal and SMETBC	<u>Curriculum Reform and Build Back Better Group</u>		October 21 – ongoing	School governors/leader are supported to implement school improvement and held to account	SCC meetings/action plans/ Report to DMT/CLT and Scrutiny/Executive EAS monthly CA reports	First meeting to be set up by Emma Jones This will be a key focus of the Headteacher Group from January 2022
HoSlal	<u>Partnership work with the EAS to broker support in line with the EAS Business Plan.</u>	Time for meetings	April 21 – September 21	HoSlal has clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development of all school settings in BG	Visit notes – not for accountability purposes	Fortnightly update meetings with HoSlal and Principle Challenge Advisor Meeting planned February 2022 to discuss the MER Cycle with all School Improvement leads across the SEWC region
	Co-construction of MER cycle to hold EAS to account for services provided to BG schools	Time for meetings	September 21 – December 21	Development of BG offer to support parents, initial pilot stage by December 21, roll out to all schools January 22	Report to DMT/CLT and Scrutiny/Executive/ share good practice across EAS	
	Fortnightly meetings with PCA to monitor MER cycle and share information about schools	Time for meetings and visits				

HoSIal and SMETBC , Richard Crook's team	<p><u>Engagement with STEM</u></p> <p>Increase opportunities for STEM links across BG schools</p> <p>Work with Regeneration on the STEM activity</p>	Staff resource and funding	Ongoing	Increased engagement with STEM in schools.	Monthly monitoring via project groups	Ystruth Primary School are engaging with the STEM Powered Learning Project on behalf of the Brynmawr Cluster
HoSIal and SMETBC	Promote 5G classroom across BG schools					The ET team are now engaged within the project group, and have led on school planning and participation. Education are presently working on the recruitment of a new staff member, to develop and oversee school engagement, training and content creation.
HoSIal and SMETBC	<p><u>Develop a LA blended learning best practice policy</u></p> <p>Work with the EAS to review current practice for governance and school leadership in current context, to inform future ways of supporting leadership</p>					
HoSIal and SMETBC	Review of support for families accessing Welsh		2020 – 2022			

HoSIal and SMETBC	Medium Education working with WG, schools and securing alignment with the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan Work with the Policy and Performance team to create Parent Engagement Survey – to inform the Blended Learning Approach, and to develop engagement/training	Education, WG and the WEF	January 2022	Draft WESP submitted wot Welsh Ministers January 2022	Monitoring is undertaken on a monthly basis	WG and WEF resources have been shared with Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg and parents. The WESP is scheduled for consultation w/c 11.10.21 The BG WESP has been drafted and is currently out to consultation. Education had been successful in securing funding via the WG Immersion Grant, to support the development of latecomer provision. In addition, an EOI has been submitted for the WG Welsh Medium Capital Grant. Initial planning meetings have taken place, in order to explore data-based requirements and plan engagement opportunities. This work will be further developed during the Spring-term 2022.
Priority 4: School Operations						
Responsibility	Action	Resources (Specific no. of days/costs)	Timescale (Start/End)	Success Criteria	Monitoring and evaluation arrangements for actions (date)	Monthly Updates
HoSIal and SMETBC	<u>Survey of schools to identify where training is not up to date e.g. Safeguarding, first aid and Health and Safety</u>	TBD	October 2021 – November 2021	Training programme developed aligned to the needs of schools	Termly monitoring with schools	Responsible Persons Training Programme in place for the autumn-term 2021. Ongoing work with H&S to plan and monitor H&S and FRA

	<p>Engagement sessions with schools – new protocols in place to support schools to manage positive cases</p> <p>All schools have emergency contact information to support escalation procedures i.e. move to blended learning</p> <p>BG updated schools based risk assessment and operational guidance, work with individual schools in order to assess individual operational plans and to advise accordingly.</p> <p>Review Home to School Transport Policy and established working group to address complex applications and policy and practices</p> <p>Monitoring group established around national shortage of drivers – target to address capacity issues as</p>	<p>Education, Environmental Health, TTP and schools</p> <p>Education, Environmental Health and schools</p> <p>H&S, Education and Environmental Health</p> <p>Education and Community Services</p> <p>Education and Community Services</p>	<p>September 2021 – ongoing (monitored fortnightly)</p> <p>July 2021 – ongoing</p> <p>July 2021 – ongoing</p> <p>July 2021 - ongoing</p> <p>September 2020 – ongoing</p>	<p>Early identification and monitoring of positive cases</p> <p>Schools are able to effectively respond to case escalation</p> <p>Schools operate safely with sufficient measures and controls in place</p> <p>All eligible pupils and students have access to transport</p> <p>Transport solutions are agreed where issues are</p>	<p>Daily monitoring undertaken and reported via Education to all relevant stakeholders</p> <p>Daily monitoring undertaken and reported via Education to all relevant stakeholders</p> <p>Daily monitoring between Education, H&S, Environmental Health and Schools</p> <p>Ongoing monitoring</p> <p>Ongoing monitoring</p>	<p>inspections, along with associated training. Ongoing engagement sessions, guidance and support for schools is in place.</p> <p>New process and guidance in place. Daily support is provided via Education and Environmental Health. Comms and guidance in place</p> <p>This is monitored daily. All schools have up to date risk assessments in place, which are frequently reviewed in line with the latest PHW and WG guidance etc. A school planning meeting took place w/c 13.12.21, with another planned for 4.1.22.</p> <p>2022/23 Policy review complete. Transport is subject to weekly monitoring processes in line with compliance, recent strike actions and provider/driver shortages. Fortnightly meetings are in place to review complex case requests for transport. A procedural review is underway and will be completed during the first part of the Spring Term 2022, along with a full service review</p>
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	a result of COVID and resource based issues with transport			identified. Meaning all pupils have access to education, without their transport needs presenting a barrier		Transport contingency plans are in place and being monitored.
	Fire Risk Assessment Review process in place	H&S and Education	September – December 2021	All schools FRA documentation is up to date	Weekly in line with COVID Secure Risk Assessment	FRA reviews have commenced and are ongoing
	Facilities Action Planning with individual schools re-established	H&S and Education	October – December 2021	All schools have up to date Facilities Action Plans	Monthly monitoring is in place	All school action plans are up to date, and works programmed for completion in order of priority.
	Minor works and maintenance programme	Community Services and Education	Ongoing	All programmed minor works are completed	Monthly monitoring is in place	The Summer and Autumn works programmes have successfully been completed, with a plan for Spring 2022 in place.

Education Recovery Plan – Overview

All schools, education providers and support services are fully operational, with children and young people able to access a full range of provision and services both school and community based, in order to meet their: Educational; Social; Emotional; Behavioural; and Other relevant needs.

Blaenau Gwent children and young people are able to effectively transition from one stage of their education to another, with wellbeing as a primary focus, supporting them to achieve their potential.

Recovery and Renewal Focus - Education has developed a detailed impact assessment in collaboration with key partners including schools, in order to determine the key priorities for recovery and renewal. The 4 overarching priority areas of focus are as follows:

- **Learner and staff Wellbeing**
- **Vulnerable Learners**
- **Academic Progress**
- **School Operations**

Present Position - Over the last academic session school operations have been negatively affected by the pandemic. The latest Welsh Government operational guidance seeks to resume normal school operations from the autumn-term 2021. During the 2020/21 academic session, data collection and school’s data management was reconfigured and/or suspended, therefore, we are currently working to establish the baseline for the above priorities as at September 2021. However, current levels of COVID within the community are affecting the school’s ability to resume normal practice. Therefore, the target for the autumn-term is to establish the baseline.

Implementation Plan - Education has worked to establish a detailed action plan for each impact area. The action plan details the work required with Council services, schools/headteachers, wider partners such as the Education Achievement Service, pupils and parents. In addition, stakeholder engagement and communication plans are in place, with 3 consultative groups having been established as follows:

- Recovery and Renewal Group
- Curriculum Reform Group
- School Operations Management Group

Key Measures to Determine Progress -The following data sets – both qualitative and quantitative, will be used to monitor and measure progress against each impact area:

Priority Area	PI	18/19	19/20	20/21	Target (when will we know we have recovered)?
Learner Wellbeing	Applications – Nursery	693	696	714	Applications are the same level or higher

					than pre-Covid levels. EHE numbers are the same or lower than pre-Covid levels.
	Applications – Primary	739	731	701	Applications are the same level or higher than pre-Covid levels. EHE numbers are the same or lower than pre-Covid levels.
	Applications – Secondary	677	679	696	Applications are the same level or higher than pre-Covid levels. EHE numbers are the same or lower than pre-Covid levels.
		July 2019	July 2020	July 2021	
	Attendance – Primary	94.4	93.5	90.7	Attendance levels are consistently in line with or higher than Wales average.
	Attendance Secondary	93.3	91.7	84.8	Attendance levels are consistently in line with or higher than Wales average.
		April 19 - March 20	April 20 - March 21	April 21 - September 2021	
	Exclusions Primary	108	25	17	Exclusions are in line with or lower than pre-Covid levels.

	Exclusions Secondary	459	135	183	Exclusions are in line with or lower than pre-Covid levels.
	Average Number of Primary exclusions per month (no. of months in brackets)	9.8	3.6	3.4	Exclusions are in line with or lower than pre-Covid levels.
	Average Number of Secondary exclusions per month (no. of months in brackets)	41.7	19.3	36.6	Exclusions are in line with or lower than pre-Covid levels.
		2019	2020	2021	
Vulnerable Learners	Entitlement to FSM/Transitionally Protected (%)	21.1	24.6	30.4	FSM numbers are in line with or lower than pre-Covid levels. This may take some time to show recovery due to entitlement being protected.
		April 19 - March 20	April 20 - March 21	April 21 - September 2021	
	Number of referrals to Social Services for children and young people of school age (3-16)	2382	2260	1702	Referrals to social services are in line with or lower than pre-Covid levels.
	Average Number of referrals to Social Services for children and young people of school age (3-16) per month (no. of months in brackets)	198.5 (12)	188.3 (12)	283.7 (6)	Referrals to social services are in line with or lower than pre-Covid levels.
	Digital Disadvantage	0	1,359 pupils with devices 161 pupils with MiFi Dongles	Under review	Need for blended learning is greatly reduced, meaning that schools have very few or no requests for devices of MiFi dongles.

Academic Progress

	2021				2020				2019			
	Capped 9	Literacy	Numeracy	Best Science	Capped 9	Literacy	Numeracy	Best Science	Capped 9	Literacy	Numeracy	Best Science
School 1	335.9	32.6	35.1	32.7	355.9	36.1	36.6	32.2	341	35	33	27
School 2	377.0	41.0	32.0	38.0	375.7	41.0	35.0	36.4	349	38	31	28
School 3	369.0	40.4	39.1	40.6	378.0	39.3	37.2	38.2	340	37	35	36
School 4	373.5	41.5	39.5	36.2	358.3	39.9	37.5	36.4	362	39	36	36

Improvement in performance from previous year.

Decline in performance from previous year.

Agenda Item 9

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: **26th January 2022**
Report Subject: **Youth Service Performance Report 2020 – 2021**
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr. Joanne Collins, Executive Member for Education**
Report Submitted by: **Joanne Sims, Service Manager – Young People and Partnerships**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
09.12.21	23.12.21	13.01.22			26.01.22	02.03.22		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Members with the opportunity to scrutinise the work of the Youth Service, demonstrating how the Council meets its statutory requirements of providing a Youth Service for young people aged 11-25, a Counselling Service for 11-25 year olds and delivers against the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework. The report will also include an update on how the service has refocussed and responded during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The report will update Members on the continued progress of all areas of the Youth Service and how the service has supported the Education Directorate's response to COVID-19. The report will outline the last available comparable data linked to the Reach, accreditation outcomes and reduction of number of young people becoming Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).
- 2.2 Blaenau Gwent Youth Service provides information, support and learning opportunities for young people aged 11-25 and also supports young people through earlier transitions from 9 years old, based on a voluntary relationship between the young person and youth worker. In addition, the Youth Service co-ordinates the 11-18 Counselling Service (statutory), the extended 18-25 Counselling Service and the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (YEPPF), which aims to reduce the numbers of young people who become NEET (not in Education, Employment or Training) up to the age of 25 through a partnership approach. The partnership now includes a focus on Youth Homelessness and Wellbeing.
- 2.3 The Youth Service is a community based provision, housed in the Ebbw Vale Cultural Centre and Abertillery Youth Centre, with support offered to young people across all secondary schools, year 6 primary schools and the River Centre 3-16. Youth Clubs are provided in Abertillery, Cwm, Ebbw Vale and Tredegar. Youth Club developments are underway in Brynmawr and a dedicated Detached Youth Team is working across the Abertillery communities, requested for and funded by the Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council.

- 2.4 Open Access Youth Services include D of E (Duke of Edinburgh), Detached and Outreach, Youth Information Service, Young Reps Volunteering programme, Youth Ambassadors (YAMs), Health and Wellbeing workshops and training, Youth Clubs, Open for Youth Nights, school holiday programmes and the 11-25 Counselling Service.
- 2.5 Targeted Youth Services include Inspire to Achieve 11-16, Inspire to Work 16-24, Youth and Community Team (Youth Homelessness and Mental Health) and the Positive Futures anti-social behaviour programme.
- 2.6 The Youth Service leads on implementing the Welsh Government's Youth Engagement and Progression Framework, prevention and support for young people at risk of becoming or currently NEET. This includes maintaining and developing the strategic multi-agency Raising Aspirations Group, implementing the Early Identification Tool to ensure that young people at risk of becoming NEET are known and supported, overseeing the lead worker role, and monitoring progress to ensure that the numbers of young people becoming NEET are reduced up to the age of 25.
- 2.7 The Youth Service facilitated the development of the 10 LA ESF programmes and line manages the two local ESF youth programmes, Inspire 2 Achieve and Inspire 2 Work. This funding has secured sustainability for the Youth Service's work linked to the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (YEPF). The funding is in place until July 2022, with an expected extension until December 2022 and has been highlighted as a corporate risk. The service has also appointed additional youth workers in the service, funded by the Welsh Government's Youth Support grant, to support young people's issues of youth homelessness and mental health.
- 2.8 Since March 2021, the newly appointed Service Manager – Young People and Partnerships has led on the development of a Post 16 Partnership and acted as the link officer for the Leisure Trust, Awen Cultural Trust and Head 4 Arts. Partnerships across these areas are positive and are integral to future delivery.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

- 3.1 **Option 1:** Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee considers and accepts the report.
Option 2: Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee considers the report and provides comments relating to improvements that can be made prior to reporting to the Executive Committee.

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

- 4.1 The Youth Service contributes to all 5 areas of the Blaenau Gwent Wellbeing Plan through supporting young people to overcome barriers in their life enabling them to become positive members of their community. The service also contributes to key objectives within the Corporate Plan, in particular those within Education and Regeneration. The programmes provide support to some of the most vulnerable young people in Blaenau Gwent, supporting them to overcome significant barriers

in their lives, including issues such as youth homelessness, unemployment and mental health. This work also ensures that the Welsh Government's Youth Engagement and Progression Framework 6 key areas are fully met.

5. Implications Against Each Option

5.1 Impact on Budget:

In 2020/21 the Youth Service was funded partly through a core budget of £380,873, and external grants of £1,459,034 (from ESF - European Social Fund, Newport Live, CCG, Welsh Government Youth Support Grant and other community grants and funding). Therefore, the total income for the Youth Service in 2020/21 was £1,839,907. All national grants have been secured for the next financial year, with the ESF funding secured up until July 2022 and additional funding sourced from Welsh Government to continue the youth work offer to young people around youth homelessness and mental health.

5.2 Risk Including Mitigating Actions:

The reliance on external funding is identified as a risk. Securing ESF monies until 2022 has provided some stability for targeted services for the past 6 years. However, the majority of grants are funded on an annual basis which does not allow long term financial planning. This along with ESF ending in 2022, has been flagged up as a risk and is being considered in the Education Directorate risk planning arrangements this year as well as the Corporate Risk Register (CRR). A report has been submitted to CLT to highlight the timescales and risk of a gap in funding between the end of ESF and the start of any future funds from UK Government.

5.3 Legal:

There are no legal implications for this report.

5.4 Human Resources:

There are no direct staffing implications associated with this report.

6. Supporting Evidence

6.1 **Performance Information and Data:**

Due to the pandemic, the national comparable data for the Youth Service was released in June 2021 and covers the period April 2019 to March 2020. No other national data has yet been released and therefore comparative performance will be reported for 2019/20 and localised performance for 2020/21. However, the data released in June 2021 continues to demonstrate the service is good, taking account of its statutory duties and meeting them effectively, providing a wide range of universal and targeted opportunities for young people aged 11-25.

6.1.1 **Youth Service Impact:**

In 2019/2020, 18% (2054 individuals) of the youth population voluntarily registered with the Youth Service, a 1% increase since the previous year, (and increase of 44 young people) placing 10th across Wales and above the Welsh national average (15%), with an additional 15089 anonymous contacts made with young people (not registered) through the 11-18 Counselling Service, Detached youth work and out of

school activities and events. 18% places Blaenau Gwent 2nd across the region (Caerphilly 17%, Monmouthshire 22%, Newport 4% and Torfaen 13%) and 4th across the family mean (Caerphilly 17%, Merthyr 29%, Neath Port Talbot 28% and RCT 26%).

- 6.1.2 Accredited outcomes for registered young people increased to 41% an increase of 26%, placing Blaenau Gwent 1st across the region and 1st (best performing) across the family mean of local authorities. This was an unusual and unexpected 'spike' in performance given that accreditations are not the focus of the work.
- 6.1.3 The ESF Inspire 2 Achieve and Inspire 2 Work programmes are highly effective in supporting young people to overcome barriers to either remain in or enter education, training or employment or to enter. The projects directly impact on young people improving their attendance, attainment or behaviour, as well as overcoming personal barriers. Through Inspire, transitional support is provided to identified young people moving from year 6 to year 7, in-between school terms and post 16. Data from Careers suggests that this additional, bespoke support has enhanced the transition of young people this year, with the second lowest numbers recorded not entering education, employment or training (1.5% unverified).
- 6.1.4 The Independent 11-25 Counselling Service is very effective. The high impact of the service is evidenced in the 11- 25 Counselling Annual report and demonstrates that the Counselling Service is having a positive impact on young people's wellbeing. In 2020/21, 302 young people aged 11-25 accessed a counsellor with a total of 1510 sessions being delivered. 59 young people chose to put sessions on hold for periods ranging from 1 to 5 months during lockdown. 1059 sessions were delivered face to face with 451 carried out using digital means.
- 6.1.5 Safeguarding is an important aspect of the service. In the financial year 2020/21, 33 DTRs (multi-agency referral forms) were submitted to Social Services. More detail relating to these are included in the Joint Safeguarding report to Joint Scrutiny.
- 6.1.6 In addition, in 2020/2021 the Youth Service recorded supporting young people anonymously (not registered) through the 11-25 Counselling Service, some detached youth work, outreach and out of school activities and events although these were limited due to the pandemic but some online activities were offered. The Youth Service had 6257 anonymous contacts with young people (one contact is between 1-3 hours).
- 6.1.7 **Effective use of core funding and grants:**
The Youth Service's core budget is effectively used to employ a small core team to access and administer external grants to meet identified need. These grants include European Social Funding, Welsh Government Youth Support Grant, Positive Futures and Children in Need. Smaller community grants are accessed in partnership with local community groups. Over the last year, both core and external funding has been secured to continue all projects for another year.

6.1.8 **Youth Engagement and Progression Framework:**

The Youth Service leads on the Welsh Government's Youth Engagement and Progression Framework, prevention and support for young people at risk of becoming or currently NEET. This includes maintaining and developing the strategic multi-agency Raising Aspirations Group, implementing the Early Identification Tool to ensure that young people at risk of becoming NEET are known and supported, overseeing the lead worker role, and monitoring progress to ensure that the numbers of young people becoming NEET are reduced up to the age of 25. 534 children and young people were identified over the last year as at risk of becoming NEET and offered additional support.

6.1.9 The Youth Service also facilitates two practitioner forums: the NEET Practitioner Forum and the Vulnerable Learners Transition subgroup, which are operational multi-agency partnerships, subgroups of the RAG, which co-ordinates the Early Identification process, allocation of lead worker role, and robust tracking and monitoring of transition from year 11 to post 16 provision.

6.1.10 As a result of this co-ordinated approach with partners, there has been a steady reduction of numbers of young people becoming NEET, the unverified figure for 2021 is 1.5% (9 young people). This is in-line with the lowest record to date. 1.5% is lower than the Welsh average of 1.7%, ranking Blaenau Gwent as joint 10th with Swansea, 3rd across our family mean and 2nd across the region.

Focus areas this year include developing the work on co-ordinating Youth Homelessness, expanding the Early Identification Tool to include risk factors around youth homelessness and the ALN Post 16 Enhanced Transition pilot.

6.1.11 **Post COVID/Responding to Poverty Agenda**

Since March 2020, the Youth Service has supported the response to COVID-19. Youth workers and counsellors are back in schools and youth centres and support has moved from dealing with essentials to supporting wellbeing. This support is provided through one to one and group work, with a growing increase in requests for detached youth work. A full summer and winter programme was provided as part of the Summer of Fun and Winter of Wellbeing. All opportunities provided by the Youth Service are free, food and transport provided. Recent examples are a residential to Jamie's Farm, a reward trip to Cardiff City Stadium and a Christmas trip to Winter Wonderland. The service works with partners to address identified need, examples include providing clothing for work/sports/proms, free gym passes to encourage healthy living and wellbeing. As part of the period poverty agenda, sanitary products are available for free in all youth service settings with this widened to include other personal hygiene items such as toothpaste, toothbrushes, soap and deodorants. The service has partnered again this year to provide Christmas Hampers to those in need. The Youth Homelessness Team work closely with colleagues in Housing to ensure that appropriate referrals are made and that young people are completing necessary paperwork to secure shelter. If accommodation is offered the Youth Service supports young people to ensure they are in receipt of the correct benefits, support with budgeting plans and access funds for furniture and appliances where needed. All projects assist young people with managing their finances, responsibilities and budget when the need is

identified. Where issues of poverty arise, staff are able to identify this and suggest referrals to Safeguarding or Families First for wider family support.

6.2 Expected outcome for the public

Young people are able to access support if and when they need it and are able to access new opportunities. These opportunities help broaden young people's horizons, raise their aspirations and the support ensures that all young people, no matter their experience, are able to participate. This can result in young people becoming active citizens in their communities, making informed choices about their future and reaching their potential.

6.3 Involvement (Consultation, engagement, participation)

Involving young people is a core principle of youth work. A bi-annual consultation takes place with young people across the borough, the Youth Service's Advisory Group (YAMS) help decide on how priorities are set and each project works with young people, both in groups or as individuals to ensure they influence the delivery and design of their particular project.

6.4 Thinking for the Long Term

The support provided is expected to better prepare young people for their future and beyond the lifetime of the programmes.

6.5 Preventative Focus

All the work of the Youth Service is preventative in nature. At a very basic level, the support and opportunities can help young people to meet with each other and with trusted adults, feel part of their community which can prevent low levels of mental health, prevent incidents of anti-social behaviour and help young people become active citizens. Targeted programmes are working to prevent youth unemployment and youth homelessness.

6.6 Collaboration/Partnership Working

The Youth Service facilitates a number of partnership forums including the Raising Aspirations Group (multi-agency partnership), the NEET Practitioner Forum and the Vulnerable Learners sub group. Working in partnership is fundamental to providing a co-ordinated, effective service. The service is continually looking at how it can better develop this area as partners evolve and change.

6.7 Integration

This service impacts upon key objectives for both Education and Environment and Regeneration Directorates and for 11-25 year olds.

6.8 EqIA

N/A

7. Monitoring Arrangements

7.1 The Youth Service reports to a number of external funders and provides an annual audit return to Welsh Government. The Raising Aspirations Group monitors the progress of the local delivery of the two Inspire programmes and the new Youth and Community Team (Youth Homelessness and Mental Health). A performance

monitoring report is presented annually to Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee to update Members on the performance of the Youth Service. Annual reports and evaluation reports are also provided to Education DMT. Feedback is provided to young people on a regular basis.

Background Documents / Electronic Links

N/A

List of Acronyms

RAG: Raising Aspirations Group (strategic multi-agency partnership)

NEET: Young people not in education, employment or training

YEPF: Youth Engagement and Progression Framework; a national framework which outlines the processes and support that needs to be in place to support young people aged 11-25 to prevent them from becoming NEET.

UNCRC: United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

D of E: Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme

ASB: Anti-Social Behaviour

EIT: Early Identification Tool which is run twice a year to identify which young people are at risk of becoming NEET

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