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Blaenau Gwent

Our Ref./Ein Cyf.
Your Ref./Eich Cyf.
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THIS IS A MEETING WHICH THE PUBLIC ARE ENTITLED TO ATTEND

21st April 2023

Dear Sir/Madam

PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

A meeting of the People Scrutiny Committee will be held in Virtually via Microsoft Teams - if you would like to attend this meeting live via Microsoft Teams please contact committee.services@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk on Friday, 28th April, 2023 at 12.00 pm.

Yours faithfully

Damien McCann
Interim Chief Executive

AGENDA

Pages

1. SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION

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

2. APOLOGIES

To receive.

Mae'r Cyngor yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg a Saesneg a byddwn yn cyfathrebu gyda chi yn eich dewis iaith, dim ond i chi rhoi gwybod i ni pa un sydd well gennych. Ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn creu unrhyw oedi.

The Council welcomes correspondence in Welsh and English and we will communicate with you in the language of your choice, as long as you let us know which you prefer. Corresponding in Welsh will not lead to any delay.

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS**

To receive.

4. **PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

5 - 8

To receive the decisions of the People Scrutiny Committee held on 28th February, 2023.

(Please note the decisions are submitted for points of accuracy only.)

5. **ACTION SHEET - 28TH FEBRUARY, 2023**

There were no actions arising.

6. **CONSULTATION ON ALN RESOURCE BASE CAPACITY**

9 - 80

To consider the report of the Service Manager Education Transformation and Business Change.

7. **BLAENAU GWENT RESPONSE TO ESTYN LOCAL GOVERNMENT EDUCATION SERVICES (LGES) INSPECTION**

81 - 116

To consider the report of the Head of School Improvement and Inclusion.

8. **CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION SERVICES ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2022/23**

117 - 166

To consider the report of the Corporate Director Education.

To: Councillor T. Smith (Chair)
Councillor J. Morgan, J.P. (Vice-Chair)
Councillor C. Bainton
Councillor D. Bevan
Councillor K. Chaplin
Councillor G. A. Davies
Councillor J. Holt
Councillor G. Thomas

Councillor D. Wilkshire
T. Baxter
T. Pritchard

All other Members (for information)
Interim Chief Executive
Chief Officers

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**SUBJECT: PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
- 28th FEBRUARY, 2023**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: Councillor T. Smith (Chair)

Councillors J. Morgan, J.P.
C. Bainton
D. Bevan
J. Holt
G.A. Davies
D. Wilkshire
G. Thomas

WITH: Interim Chief Executive
Corporate Director of Education
Interim Head of Children's Services
Head of Adult's Services
Head of Governance & Partnerships
Head of School Improvement & Inclusion
Service Manger Education Transformation & Business Change
Service Manager Young People & Partnerships
Strategic Education Improvement Manager
Press & Publicity Officer
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer

AND: Councillor H. Trollope – Cabinet Member People & Social Services

Mr. Mark Champion) Estyn
Mr. Farrukh Khan)

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
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 reported for Councillor K. Chaplin and Mr. Tim Baxter.</p>	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>Councillor D. Wilkshire declared an interim in Item No. 9 - Business Case to purchase 2 properties for use as Residential Children's Homes.</p>	
No. 4	<p><u>PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The decisions of the People Scrutiny Committee held on 17th January, 2023 were submitted.</p> <p>It was reported that Councillor J. Holt's apologies had been omitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the decisions be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 5	<p><u>ACTION SHEET – PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 17th JANUARY, 2023</u></p> <p>The Action sheet arising from the meeting held on 17th January, 2023, was submitted.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the action sheet be noted.</p>	
No. 6	<p><u>BLAENAU GWENT ESTYN LOCAL GOVERNMENT EDUCATION SERVICES (LGES) INSPECTION OUTCOME</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate</p>	

	<p>Director of Education.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted as provided (Option 2).</p>	
No. 7	<p><u>BLAENAU GWENT ADMISSIONS POLICY FOR NURSERY AND STATUTORY EDUCATION 2024/25</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Corporate Director of Education / Service Manager Education Transformation and Business Change.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the policy document be accepted (Option 1).</p>	
No. 8	<p><u>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – 18TH APRIL, 2023</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Scrutiny & Democratic Officer.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Forward Programme for the meeting 18th April 2023 be noted.</p>	
No. 9	<p><u>BUSINESS CASE TO PURCHASE 2 PROPERTIES FOR USE AS RESIDENTIAL CHILDREN’S HOMES</u></p> <p>Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14, Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).</p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Interim Head of Children’s Services.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report which</p>	

contained information relating to the financial/business affairs of persons other than the Authority be accepted; and the Committee:

- Support the business case for the purchase of 2 properties to be developed into a children's residential home. The identified revenues savings to be built into Bridging the Gap to support the Council's budget pressures in 2024/25 and future years (Part 1 Option 1); and
- Support the purchase of the 2 properties above market value and the use of the capital contingency fund to fund the £65,000 shortfall in capital costs for the purchase (Part 2 Option 1)

Agenda Item 6

Cabinet and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A

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

Committee: **People Scrutiny Committee**
Date of meeting: **28th April 2023**
Report Subject: **Consultation on ALN Resource Base Capacity**
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Sue Edmunds, Cabinet Member People and Education**
Report Submitted by: **Joanne Watts, Service Manager Education Transformation and Business Change**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
16.3.23	30.3.23	20.04.23			28.4.23			

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to consult with the People Scrutiny Committee as a statutory consultee for the proposal to increase the capacity of Resource Bases across the County Borough, accommodating the demand for places in both Primary and Secondary settings (**Appendix 1 the Consultation Document**).

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 There are currently Resource Bases across Blaenau Gwent accommodating 61 learners in Primary settings and 62 at Secondary settings. There is an increasing need for Resource Base placements in mainstream settings for children and young people within the Borough both at Primary (aged 3-11) and Secondary settings (aged 11-16).
- 2.2 All current resource bases in the County Borough are full to capacity. The recent Estyn inspection highlighted 'In the planning of provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN), data is not always used effectively enough to inform long-term planning'. The Education Transformation and Inclusion teams have therefore undertaken a review of the current provision and have used this data to project the demand going forward, under this proposal Education are seeking to set up new Resource Bases in line with the projected demand, with the aim of also reducing Out of County placements in the medium term and having a more localised strategy for learners.
- 2.3 The Council is committed to providing all children and young people with high quality education and training tailored to meet their needs, which will develop their potential, extend aspirations, promote social inclusion and contribute to the economic regeneration of the area. Resource Bases are essential for pupils with identified ALN requirements to enable them to fulfil their potential.
- 2.4 The implementation of the ALN legislation from Sept 2021 has resulted in changes in the statutory processes required. Statements maintained by the

Local Authority will now be phased out over a 4-year period. Not all Individual Development Plans (IDPs) will be maintained by the Local Authority; only those for children accessing Resource Bases /Special Schools /Detained or those accessing out of county placements. School based IDPs will be maintained by the home school.

2.5 Both Welsh Government and the Authority's Welsh in Education Forum (WEF) partnership have identified that there is no ALN provision for Welsh medium education across the Borough, this can result in learners having to transfer into English medium settings when an additional learning need is identified, therefore highlighting the need for a welsh medium resource base to be established.

2.6 **The Proposal (Appendix 1)** - Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council propose to increase the capacity for Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Resource Bases across the County Borough in both Primary and Secondary settings for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Additional Learning Needs Resource Bases (ALNRB) pupils. The Council will work with the schools to develop a long-term plan to support sustained growth and development. Therefore, this proposal will be delivered in 2 phases:

2.7 **Phase 1** - To increase resource base capacity in primary schools from 61 to 86 places (including 15 Welsh-medium places) and to increase secondary school capacity from 62 to 80 places, as follows:

- To recognise the transition group established in Ebbw Fawr 3-16 Learning Community-Secondary Phase as a 6 place LRB from September 2023
- To create a 6-8 place ASD Resource Base at Tredegar Comprehensive School from September 2023
- To create a 10 place ASD/ALN Resource Base at Sofrydd Primary School from September 2024/25
- To create a 15 place ASD/ALN Resource Base at Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg from September 2024

2.8 **Phase 2**

The development of a Medium-term plan to secure additional capacity to facilitate sustained growth and development in Primary and Secondary settings. This will include provision at the following schools between 2025 and 2029:

- To create an ASD/ALN Resource Base at Brynmawr Foundation School for 10 pupils
- To create an ASD/ALN Resource Base at Cwm Primary School for 10 pupils
- To create, if required, an ASD/ALN Resource base at a faith based primary school in Blaenau Gwent (yet to be determined) for 10 pupils
- To create an ASD/ALN Resource Base at Abertillery 3-16 Learning Community - Roseheyworth Road Primary Campus for 10 pupils

It should be noted some/all of these will only be implemented if required following a review of the impact of Phase 1.

2.9 In addition, the Council will remodel learning environments to create additional classroom space and associated facilities to accommodate the proposal and will also develop nurture provisions in schools in order to create a more inclusive environment and to support the majority of learners with additional learning needs in a mainstream setting.

2.10 Should nothing change, the Local Authority will be unable to meet the needs of many learners, particularly those with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) or Additional Learning Needs (ALN) within Blaenau Gwent. Therefore, they would need to be placed Out of County. The costs of Out of County specialist provision would increase significantly year-on-year, and learners are likely to be traveling longer distances to receive specialist education extending their school day, care etc. and placing further pressures on the Home-to-School Transport budget which is already significantly over spent and so represents a risk to the Council.

2.11 **Expected Benefits and Advantages**

- Creation of a local solution which will address the increased demand for ALN provision.
- Continuity and sustainability in terms of local education for learners with specialist and medical needs.
- The structure will build confidence and self-esteem in pupils' parents and staff.
- A local option for pupils transitioning from mainstream school to resources bases.
- Reduce the costs associated with out of county placements and home to school transport, whilst securing local investment within the Blaenau Gwent school estate.
- Improve access to and facilities for learners who meet the criteria for ALN provision across the county borough.
- Reduced travel time for learners and the carbon footprint.

2.12 **Consultation Requirements**

The Welsh Government School Organisation Code Second Edition (2018), dictates that proposals **must** be published for the following elements of school reorganisation:

1. the opening of a maintained school (including a special school);
2. the closing of a maintained school (including a special school);
3. to make a regulated alteration to a maintained school; and,
4. to change the category of a maintained school.

The proposal to increase the capacity for Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Resource Bases across various Primary & Secondary School settings will involve changes to a maintained school. Section 48 of the 2013 Act requires that before school organisation proposals are published under sections 41-45, they **must** first be subject to consultation.

- 2.13 The proposed consultation document and timeline takes account of the publication and other statutory requirements as set out within the code. The proposed consultation timeline - if approved, is as follows:
- Consultation to commence on – **Monday 24th April 2023**
 - Consultation to conclude on – **Tuesday 6th June 2023** (inclusive of 20 school days)
 - Outturn Report to Cabinet to proceed to Statutory Notice (28 days) – June 2023
 - Objections report from Statutory Notice to Cabinet for decision to implement – September 2023
 - Implementation - September 2023

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 There are 2 options associated with the consultation, as follows:

- 3.2
- **Option 1** – People Scrutiny Committee considers and accepts the consultation document.
- 3.3
- **Option 2** – People Scrutiny Committee considers and provides comments in relation to the associated consultation document, either as part of this meeting or by following the process identified on pages 7 & 8 of the consultation document.

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

4.1 In accordance with the Welsh Government School Organisation Code (2018), there is a statutory requirement for Councils to consult upon and publish school reorganisation proposals. Education is a strategic priority within the Corporate Plan. In order to enable people to 'Maximise learning and skills for all to create a prosperous, thriving, resilient Blaenau Gwent'.

4.2 In addition, the proposal would support the Education Directorate's purpose to deliver:

'Better Schools, Better Citizens and Better Communities'

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

There are capital financial implications associated with Phase 1 of this proposal for the Council of approximately £300,000. This will be met via contributions from the Welsh Government ALN Grant funding and Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme over a 3-year period.

5.1.1 Blaenau Gwent currently has 11 ALN pupils that are educated outside the Local Authority at a cost of £600,000 per year (22/23 price base), the budget for 2023/24 is £720,000. If Blaenau Gwent was able to increase capacity in resource base provisions, there would be opportunities to consider making education provision for some of the 11 pupils back in Blaenau Gwent

5.1.2 Revenue implications associated with Phase 1 of the project have been modelled - If pupils are unable to be placed locally in a resource base, then they would need to be placed in Out County placements which could see these annual costs incrementally increase in line with the projected demand by approximately £1.3m by the 2025/26 financial year **(See table below)**

5.1.3 Revenue costs associated with Phase 1 of the project have been modelled (Appendix 4) and are as follows:

Financial Year	Revenue Costs	Anticipated Virement from Out County Placements Budget	Shortfall	Do Nothing - Likely Increase in Cost of Out County Placements
2023/24	£73,184	0	£73,184	297,192
2024/25	£269,665	£138,096	£131,569	1,157,568
2025/26	£399,585	£276,192	£123,393	1,313,964
2026/27	£442,786	£414,288	£28,498	1,313,964
2027/28	£442,786	£442,786	£0	1,313,964
Total	£1,628,006	£1,271,362	£356,644	£5,396,652

5.1.4 It is anticipated the proposal will begin to impact on the requirement for Out County placements from the 2024/25 financial year as highlighted in the table above, therefore reducing this expenditure and allowing funding to be vired accordingly. In the short term there will likely be a shortfall each year when compared to the current budgets however it is predicted to avoid significant cost increases in terms of Out of County placements. It is proposed these additional costs be funded from a combination of the ALN Implementation grant (this is specifically given to Local Authorities to support the implementation of ALN reform and the financial pressure this causes), the ALN reserve and Invest to Save funding (if required).

5.1.5 Costs associated with home to school transport for out county placements are increasing for ALN pupils, the costs are forecast to be £274,352 for the 2022/23 financial year. These costs are regularly reviewed and subject to change in line with pupil placement. Should the proposal be implemented the Council would also see an incremental reduction in the transport costs associated with Out County placements every year.

5.1.6 The financial implications associated with Phase 2 of the project will be considered in full once Phase 1 has been completed and the impact assessed.

5.2 **Risk including Mitigating Actions**

If the proposal is not taken forward, there is both a placement and a financial risk in terms of securing suitable ALN resource bases provision in and Out of County for learners, and the associated increased cost of Home to School Transport.

- 5.3 **Legal**
Legal advice has been sought in relation to the consultation document.
- 5.4 **Human Resources**
The proposed increase in pupil numbers will require the Governing Body of all affected schools to plan for the workforce requirements in readiness for the respective expansions. Organisational Development will provide advice, support and guidance to the Governing Bodies for the workforce planning and consequential recruitment processes.
6. **Supporting Evidence**
- 6.1 **Performance Information and Data**
Please refer to the Consultation document (**Appendix 1**) relating to the proposal.
- 6.2 **Expected outcome for the public**
The public can expect a fair and equitable consultation process, which is fully compliant with the Welsh Government School Organisation Code (2018).
- 6.3 **Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)**
Stakeholder engagement is a key focus of all school organisation proposals. The proposal will be subject to consultation in line with the Welsh Government School Organisation Code (2018), which will then be used to inform decision making processes moving forward. The consultation process will involve the following meetings:
26th April 23 – Joint Consultative Committee
28th April 23 – Scrutiny Committee
2nd May 23 – Ebbw Vale drop-in Session for schools, public, parents etc
3rd May 23 – Tredegar drop-in Session for schools, public, parents etc
9th May 23 – Abertillery drop-in Session for schools, public, parents etc
10th May 23 - Brynmawr drop-in Session for schools, public, parents etc
- In addition, in line with the code, pupils will be consulted via the Youth Forum, Grand School Council and school councils of the affected schools.
- 6.4 **Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)**
The consultation details a proposal which looks to secure additional provision for both Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and ALN Resource Base (ALNRB) provision in line with local demand for places for the long-term development, and sustainability of the education system in Blaenau Gwent.
- 6.5 **Preventative focus**
The proposal seeks to address sustainability issues associated with the future growth and development of the ALN reform Act and resource base placements in the County Borough.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

The consultation along with the development of the proposal have been developed collaboratively with both the Inclusion Team, Headteachers, Finance, and Community Services.

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

The proposal seeks to secure integration for new and existing pupils in ALN placements supporting growth and sustainability of provision for the future needs of learners.

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

By having provision locally, it will address the Green Agenda reducing carbon emissions for learners travelling excessively for their educational needs.

6.9 ***Integrated Impact Assessment***

See **Appendix 2** attached.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 There will be extensive monitoring in line with the consultation processes, responses and outcomes which would be answered, analysed and taken via the Council's political processes.

Background Documents / Electronic Links

- **Appendix 1** – Consultation Document
- **Appendix 2** - Integrated Impact Assessment

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Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Formal Consultation Document proposal
to Improve provision and build capacity
for Additional Learning Needs (ALN)
Pupils across the County Borough

The Consultation Commences:
Monday 24th April 2023 and concludes
at 5pm on Tuesday 6th June 2023

What is this booklet about?

This booklet has been prepared for parents/carers, school staff, school governors and the wider community of Blaenau Gwent. The booklet provides an overview of the consultation process associated with the Council's formal proposal for a **delivery model to improve provision and build capacity for Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Pupils across the County Borough**. It will be of particular interest to parents/carers whose children are attending a Resource Base.

If you would like this information in any other format, please contact the Education Transformation team either via email or telephone, as follows:

- Email us: 21stcenturyschools@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk or,
- Call us on: (01495) 355470



Glossary of Terms - Please note the following terms used throughout this document:

Additional Learning Needs (ALN)	A pupil learner has ALN if there is a learning difficulty or disability which calls for additional learning provision (ALP).
Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	Is a complex developmental condition that involves persistent challenges in social interaction, speech and nonverbal communication and restricted/repetitive behaviours. The effects of ASD and the severity of symptoms are different in each person.
Child Looked After (CLA)	Is a child in the care of a Local Authority either: through a Care Order made by a court, or voluntary agreement with their parent(s) to accommodate them.
Local Authority	An organisation that is officially responsible for all the public services and facilities in a particular area.
Local Development Plan (LDP)	Sets out each local planning authority's proposals for future development and use of land in their area.
Numbers on Roll (NoR)	The number of pupils at a school (not including nursery and Learning Resource Base Pupils).
Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC)	PLASC is an electronic collection of pupil and school level data provided by all maintained sector primary, middle, secondary, nursery and special schools in January each year (more information can be found on the Welsh Government website).
Resource Base (RB)	A small setting in a mainstream school for pupils with ALN whose needs cannot be met in the mainstream alone. Pupils are taught by specialist teachers and learning support assistants. It is anticipated that pupils accessing a resource base will also have opportunities to attend mainstream classes.
Special School	A school for pupils with a complex learning/medical need or disability, whose needs cannot be met in a mainstream school or Resource Base provision. The pupils at a special school will have either a statement of SEN or an IDP.
Statement of Additional Learning Needs	A pupil with a statement of SEN or an IDP who has additional learning needs which calls for additional learning provision. This means: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the pupil has significantly greater difficulty learning than most pupils of the same age, or the pupil has a disability that needs different educational facilities from those that the school generally provides for pupils.
Statutory Notice	A statutory notice is the formal publication of a finalised proposal. This will only be undertaken if a decision is made by the Council's Executive Committee to proceed with a proposal, following consideration of all responses from the consultation process. This is a legal requirement as outlined in the School Organisation Code (2018).
Statutory School Age (SSA)	A child who is over the age of 5 and under the age of 16 that is eligible to attend school.

Table of Contents

	Page
Section 1: Introduction	6-7
Section 2: Consultation Process	
• Who we are consulting with	7
• Consultation Overview	7-8
• Consultation with Children & Young People	8
Section 3: The Proposal	
• Overview	9
• Investment Objectives	10
• Rationale and Background Information - Why change is necessary	10
• ALN Policies & Principles	10
• Standards of Provision	10
• Need for places and the impact on accessibility of schools	11-12
• Learning Resource Bases	12
• Covid Pandemic & Post Covid emerging theme	12-13
• Demand for Places	13
• Specialist Schools	13
• Early Years and Nursery Provision	13
• Additional Learning Needs Provision	14
• Welsh-medium Provision	14-15
• Options Considered	15-16
• The Preferred Option	16
• Risk and Mitigation	16-17
• Benefits of Proposal	17
• Expected Benefits and Advantages (when compared with the status quo – do nothing)	17
• Disadvantages.	17
• Governance model	18
• Learner travel arrangements	18
Section 4: Consultation Outcome and Next Steps	
• Consultation Report	19
• Statutory Notice	19
• Determination of Proposal	19
• Decision Notification	19
• Timeline	19
Section 5: Details of Affected Schools	
• Schools that are directly affected	20
• Schools that are in-directly affected	20
• Surplus Capacity Statement	20-21

Section 6: Other Considerations

- Finance 21
- Revenue Costs 21-22
- Transport Costs 22
- Capital Costs 22-23
- Capital Costs/Capital Receipts 23
- Admission Arrangements 23
- Impact of the proposal on the Welsh Language 23
- Equality impact Assessment 23
- Community & Welsh Language Impact Assessments 23
- United Nations Conventions for the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) 23-24
- Engagement of Children & Young People in this Consultation 24
- Housing developments 24
- Human Resource 24-25
- Partnerships 25

Section 7: Present Arrangements

- Estyn 25
- Quality and Standards in Education 25-26
 - Standards 26
 - Wellbeing & Attitudes to Learn 26
 - Teaching & Learning Experience 26
 - Care, Support & Guidance 26
 - Leadership & Management 27
- Impact of the Proposal 27

Section 8: Overview of the Proposal 27-29

- Admission no. and arrangements and no. of nursery places
- Age range
- Pupil places
- Capacity
- Location
- Category school and language
- Schedule of accommodation
- List of facilities provided under the Proposal
- School Catchment Area
- Transition arrangements

Section 9: Pro-forma 30

Appendix 1: Consultee list	31
Appendix 2: Location, Pupil Numbers & Projects for schools affected	32
Appendix 3: Condition Survey and Facilities review for schools affected	33
Appendix 4: Community Impact Assessment (CIA)	34-36
Appendix 5: Estyn Results for New Proposals	37-38
Appendix 6: Estyn Recommendations for New Proposals	39-40

Tables:

1. Drop in Sessions	8
2. Long List of Options	15-16
3. Risks & Mitigation	16-17
4. The Statutory Process Timeline	19
5. Potential breakdown of costs per individual Resource Base	22-23
6. Phase 1 New proposed Resource Bases	27-28
7. Phase 2 New proposed Resource Bases	28

Figures:

1. Current Primary Resource Base Provision	11
2. Current Secondary Resource Base Provision	11
3. Primary Resource Base data last 5 years	12
4. Secondary Resource Base data last 5 years	12
5. Pupil Projections for Resource Base Primary	14
6. Pupil Projections for Resource Base Secondary	14
7. Illustration of Housing Development	24

Section 1: Introduction



The Council are committed to providing all children and young people with high quality education and training tailored to meet their needs, which will develop their potential, extend aspiration, promote social inclusion, and contribute to the economic regeneration of the area. A review of existing and future provision for both Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and ALN Resource Base is essential for pupils to enable them to fulfil their potential. Therefore, this proposal is a key priority for the Council.

The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 (ALNET) Legislation 2018 and the Corresponding ALN Code of Practice 2021 came into force with the focus now changing on how data is recorded in Local Authorities and schools. The focus is now on schools meeting the needs of pupils under universal and targeted provision through quality teaching and learning.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (“the Council”) reviews the capacity of its schools on an annual basis. As such, the Council is responding to the increased demand and growth noted over the course of the last 3 years, in line with pupil placement requests to the ALN panel for both ASD and ALN Resource Base (RB) settings.

The County Borough currently has 2 special schools which are:

- Pen y Cwm Special School which caters for complex needs; and
- The River Centre 3-16 Learning Community for Social and Emotional Behaviour Difficulties (SEBD) consisting of 3 separate sites:
 - Primary Phase (Thomas Richard Centre)
 - Secondary Phase (Pontygof site Ebbw Vale)
 - Stewards House (Ebbw Vale)

There are also seven Learning Resource Bases for Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and ALN in mainstream settings across the County Borough:

- **Primary sector:**
 - Abertillery 3-16 Learning Community – Six Bells Campus
 - Coed y Garn Primary School
 - Glanhwy Primary School
 - Willowtown Primary School
 - Ystruth Primary School
- **Secondary sector:**
 - Abertillery 3-16 Learning Community ALN – Secondary Campus
 - Ebbw Fawr 3-16 Learning Community ASD – Secondary Campus**

** Ebbw Fawr 3-16 Learning Community Secondary Campus also has a school transitional class which under this proposal will be formally recognised as a Council run resource base.

Section 2: Consultation Process

Prior to any decision being made on the proposal to **Improve provision and build capacity for Additional Learning Needs Pupils which includes ASD and ALN RB's across the County Borough**, the Council is required to undertake statutory consultation with all interested and affected parties. This is necessary since the proposal will see the establishment and change of ALN provisions in a number of Primary and Secondary school in the County Borough. This section provides an overview of the consultation process.

This consultation, will provide consultees with the opportunity to learn more about, understand and express their views on the Council's proposal, which will inform the final decision as to how the proposal is taken forward. The feedback and comments received during the consultation process will be collated, analysed, and included in a consultation report which will be published. Consultees who wish to register their wish to be notified of the publication of the consultation report should contact the Council using the contact details in this document. The Councils Cabinet will then make the final decision on whether to take forward some or all of the proposals based on the outcome and feedback received during the consultation.

Who we are Consulting with

This Consultation Document will be distributed, in accordance with the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code Version 2 (November 2018). **Appendix 1** of this this consultation document details the full list of consultees who will be targeted during the statutory consultation period.

Consultation Overview

The consultation period for this proposal will commence on **Monday 24th April 2023** and conclude on **Tuesday 6th June 2023**. Consultees can submit their views on the proposal; however, it should be noted that responses received during this period will not be logged as objections to the proposal. Objections can only be registered following the publication of the Statutory Notice. Should the proposal proceed, and consultees wish to make an objection, they will need to do so in writing during the statutory notice period outlined on **page 20**.

The Council would like you to consider the information set out in this document and provide your views on the proposals.

If you have any questions about the proposals or queries on the information contained within this document or suggestions or alternatives to the proposals, please contact us by using either the email address below, or by calling us on (01495) 355470.

21stcenturyschools@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk



You are also welcome to complete the online survey using the following link: <https://online1.snapsurveys.com/d1daqu>

Written comments on the proposal can be sent to: **Education Transformation Team, Education Department, Floor 8 Anvil Court, Abertillery, NP13 1DB**

All consultation responses should be received by **5pm on Tuesday 6th June 2023 at the latest.**

The Education Transformation team has planned virtual meetings with Trade Union and Scrutiny Committee representatives. All affected School Governing Bodies, Staff, Pupils parents and the wider community will have access to a series of scheduled drop-in sessions throughout the consultation period. At all of the below events in **Table 1**, Council officers will be available to answer any questions that you may have.

Table 1 -Drop in Sessions

Location	Date	Time(s)	Session aimed at:
Ebbw Vale Learning Action Centre James St, Ebbw Vale NP23 6JG	2 nd May 2023	3pm – 6:30pm	Governing Body, All Staff, Parents and Wider Community
Ty Bedwellty Morgan Street, Tredegar, NP22 3XN	3 rd May 2023	3pm – 6:30pm	Governing Body, All Staff, Parents and Wider Community
Abertillery Metropole Cultural & Conference Centre 2 Mitre St, Abertillery NP13 1AE	9 th May 2023	3pm – 6:30pm	Governing Body, All Staff, Parents and Wider Community
Brynmawr Rugby Club Catholic Road, Brynmawr NP23 4EF	10 th May 2023	3pm – 6:30pm	Governing Body, All Staff, Parents and Wider Community

A frequently asked questions page will be developed and updated throughout the consultation period and can be found on the consultation webpage. Should you feel the need to and/or feel strongly about discussing the proposal in person, please contact us via the 21st century schools email address as follows: 21stcenturyschools@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk and a virtual meeting over Microsoft teams can be arranged.

Consultation with Children and Young People

There will be an opportunity for the pupils of any new or existing school where there will be a ASD or ALN RB established, along with other children and young people from the county borough to participate in the consultation process. All information gathered from the consultation process will form part of the consultation report.

Section 3: The Proposal

Overview

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council propose to increase the capacity for ALN and ASD Resource Bases across the County Borough in certain Primary and Secondary Schools. This will involve the establishment and change of ALN provisions in a number of Primary and Secondary Schools in the Council Borough. The proposal is to increase ASD and ALN places from 61 to 86 across the Primary Schools and increase the provision at Secondary Schools from 62 to 80 places in Phase 1 (including 15 Welsh-medium places). Further the proposals include the potential to increase places by a further 40 places in Phase 2 (including a Faith Based provision). This will take effect from September 2023 on a phased basis over the next 5 years.

The Council plan to remodel existing learning environments to create classroom spaces and associated facilities to accommodate and provide appropriate resources for the proposed ALN and ASD provisions. In addition, and alongside this, the Council will work with the schools to develop a long-term plan to support sustained growth and development.

Therefore, this proposal will be delivered in 2 phases:

Phase 1

- To recognise the transition group established in Ebbw Fawr 3-16 Learning Community-Secondary Phase as a 6 place RB from September 2023
- To create a 6-8 place ASD Resource Base at Tredegar Comprehensive School from September 2023
- To create a 10 place ASD/ALN Resource Base at Sofrydd Primary School from September 2024/25
- To create a 15 place ASD/ALN Resource Base at Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg from September 2024

Phase 2

The development of a Medium-term plan to secure additional capacity to facilitate sustained growth and development in Primary and Secondary Schools. This will include provision at the below schools between 2025 and 2029:

- To create an ASD/ALN Resource Base at Brynmawr Foundation School for 10 pupils
- To create an ASD/ALN Resource Base at Cwm Primary School for 10 pupils
- To create, if required, an ASD/ALN Resource base at a Faith Based Primary school (such as Roman Catholic/Church in Wales Schools) in Blaenau Gwent (yet to be determined) for 10 pupils
- To create an ASD/ALN Resource Base at Abertillery 3-16 Learning Community - Roseheyworth Road Primary Campus for 10 pupils

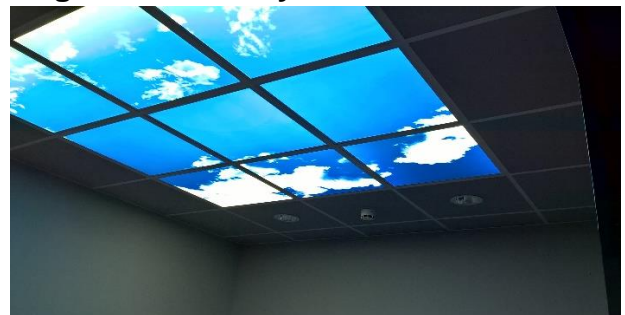
The proposal would support the Education Directorate's purpose to deliver:

'Better Schools, Better Citizens and Better Communities'

The proposal is in keeping with Blaenau Gwent's Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme investment objectives which are:

- **Investment Objective 1:** to raise standards and achievement in line with localised targets at Foundation Phase, KS2, KS3 and KS4; and secure improved transition into post 16 learning
- **Investment Objective 2:** to create a sustainable model for the 21st Century school estate in consideration of both capital and revenue investment, along with the condition and suitability of buildings
- **Investment Objective 3:** to establish effective management and provision of school places, by having the right schools of the right size in the right place
- **Investment Objective 4:** to implement the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme (formally the 21st Century Schools programme) in line with local, regional and national school organisation policy; ensuring synergy between progression, development and implementation
- **Investment Objective 5:** meeting the needs of learners who are vulnerable and/or present with ALN

Rationale and Background Information - Why Change is Necessary



ALN Policies and Principles

The ALNET Legislation came into force in 2018 and the ALN Code of Practice has been implemented since 2021. The focus has now changed on how data is recorded in Local Authorities and schools. The focus is now on schools meeting the needs of pupils under the universal and targeted provision through quality teaching and learning.

The Council has reviewed all provision for pupils with ALN across the County Borough. This review has better enabled the Local Authority to continue to meet the needs of all pupils. In addition, a working party of key stakeholders with an ALN focus including Headteachers from across Blaenau Gwent is operational. It is the expectation that the working party will also inform future planning for supporting all pupils with an additional learning need, including Welsh medium settings.

Standards of Provision

Should this proposal proceed, it will improve the suitability of the learning environment for pupils with ALN, it will also provide access to local provision in mainstream settings for ALN pupils. This will help with individual needs of pupils such as health, safety and welfare issues identified in the application for places in Resource Bases.

Places will be available locally for pupils living in Blaenau Gwent; improving learner outcomes and inclusion on a County Borough level. Also the proposal can offer places in Blaenau Gwent for pupils from other Local Authorities, should the need arise and if space is available.

Need for additional places and the impact on accessibility of schools

The data collated below demonstrates that there is a need for ASD/ALN provision in our mainstream schools to support this proposal. Currently provision is full in our ALN resource bases and there will be no growth to support our learners if this proposal does not proceed. Blaenau Gwent already has cross border regional working arrangements in place for places in ALN provision.

All learning resource bases for both ASD and ALN are based in primary and secondary mainstream settings across the County Borough. These settings cater for 3-16 year olds (no nursery ASD provision). Other than Pen y Cwm Special School, Blaenau Gwent does not have any post 16 settings in its secondary school buildings, any pupil over the age of 16 would transition in to Post 16 opportunities which could include Coleg Gwent, apprenticeships, work-based learning or employment.

The current provisions are shown below in **Figure 1 & 2**, this information is for academic year 2022/23 as at 14th December 2022.

Figure 1 - Current Primary Schools	Type of Provision	Places available	Places taken	Places available
Abertillery Learning Community 3-16 Six Bells Primary Campus	ALN RB	9	7	2
Coed Y Garn Primary School KS2	ALN RB	12	12	0
Glanhowy Primary School	ASD	12	14	-2
Willowtown Primary School	ALN RB	16	15	1
Ystruth Primary School	ASD	12	14	-2
	Total spaces	61	62	-1

Figure 2 - Current Secondary Schools	Type of Provision	Places available	Places taken	Places available
Abertillery 3-16 Learning Community - Secondary Campus	ALN RB	42	41	1
Ebbw Fawr 3-16 Learning Community – Secondary Phase	ASD	18	21	-3
Ebbw Fawr 3-16 Learning Community – Secondary Phase	Transition group		6	-6
	Total spaces	60	68	-8

The tables above show there is limited capacity in the County Borough to accommodate demand in the resource bases. In 2015 the Council undertook an ALN consultation resulting in the re-designation of a primary complex needs resource base to ASD provision and the opening of a new provision at Ebbw Fawr 3-16 Learning Community – Secondary Phase. **Appendix 2** (location, pupil numbers and projections) **and Appendix 3** (Schools condition survey and facilities) provides an overview of all the schools within the County Borough directly and indirectly affected. This information provides details of the facilities available in all schools and numbers on roll. There has been significant investment into the school estate from our Sustainable Communities for Learning programme, Welsh Governments Capital Maintenance Grant and the ALN grant to improve provision for our pupils.

The most recent investment has been in:

- Pen y Cwm Special School to improve their specialist rooms and learning environment
- River Centre 3-16 Learning Community - secondary campus refurbishment
- Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg, creation of a sensory room and nurture space

Learning Resource Bases

Data in **Figure 3** (Primary) and **Figure 4** (Secondary) suggests that from 2017/18 in primary Schools, places have become in demand rising from 48 to 64 places (an increase of 25%), whereas in the secondary sector it has risen by 2 places from 60 to 62 (4%). However, as the primary sector numbers have grown significantly over the last few years there is a pressing need to create additional spaces in both primary and secondary Schools to accommodate demand.

Figure 3 - last 5 years Primary resource base figures

	Last 5 years data for Resource Bases				
Primary	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2021/22
Resource Capacity	n/k	61	61	65	65
Places taken	n/k	48	45	65	64
Amount over capacity	n/k	-13	-16	0	-1

Figure 4 – last 5 years Secondary resource base figures

	Last 5 years data for Resource Bases				
Secondary	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2021/22
Resource Capacity	n/k	60	60	62	62
Places taken	n/k	60	60	62	62
Amount over capacity	n/k	0	0	0	0

Pupil numbers and demand for places at Resource Bases has significantly increased over the course of the last four years, resulting, on occasions, in oversubscription, along with a waiting list, which as of March 2023 has 6 pupils awaiting placement. Therefore, the Local Authority is seeking to increase the capacity (in terms of the number of places) in Resource Bases as follows:

- Phase 1 – Primary from 61 to 92 places (inclusive of 15 Welsh-medium places) and Secondary from 62 places to 76 places: and,
- Phase 2 - potentially Primary from 92 to 122 places (inclusive of 10 Faith based places) and Secondary from 76 to 86 places

The Local Authority is projecting a continued upward trend in terms of demand/pupil numbers going forward. If projected demand for places in Resource Bases continues it will put pressure on the Local Authority to place pupils Out of County, should we not be able to secure additional places locally. The Council seeks to address the aforementioned issues by increasing the capacity of local Resource Bases in mainstream school and River Centre 3-16 Learning Community secondary campus to facilitate the increased demand for places and secure medium-term growth.

Covid Pandemic and Post Covid emerging theme

Since the Covid Pandemic in 2020, there has been an impact on everything worldwide. This includes all services provided by the Council. Work practices changed with the introduction of digital engagement with parents, and as a result there has been a rise in numbers of children in their early years who require additional support via the health services (diagnoses) and education

support where they have missed that social interaction with other children. The full extent of development delay as a result of Covid and associated factors is unknown currently but is expected to increase the need of Blaenau Gwent pupils moving forward.

Demand for Places

Within Blaenau Gwent and based on the September 2022 Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) data the number of pupils with Additional Needs (has increased. At present, 14% (1,389) of Statutory School Age pupils (9,389) in the County Borough have an Additional Learning Need/SEN Status. There are currently 250 children with a Statement of SEN or an IDP (Individual Development Plan) in Blaenau Gwent of Statutory School Age.

In an attempt to develop a model with the aim of predicting the number of places required, the Council has used historic data and associated trends and have considered the number of requests which were agreed by the ALN Panel. We have also considered the number of resource base and special school leavers on an annual basis. We were then able to establish the net increase on an annual basis. Based on the current numbers on roll, and the information above, we have predicted forward demand.

Therefore, demand has risen and is likely to continue to do so in line with inward migration, increased survival rates of children with complex needs and finally, placement requests from other Local Authorities with sufficiency issues. The Council is aware that the growth and demand for specialist education placements is on the increase throughout Wales. Neighbouring Authorities have undertaken consultation upon growth of special school capacity and resource bases to facilitate demand, or are considering doing so, due to sufficiency of places. If The Council does not secure sufficient places for its pupils, it is unlikely that neighbouring Local Authorities will have capacity to accommodate them, resulting in potentially very high Out of County placement costs, increased traveling time and decreased accessibility to local education options for the most vulnerable pupils with the highest level of need.

Specialist Schools

It should also be noted that in 2020 the council went out to consult on increasing the capacity for Pen y Cwm Special school to accommodate the demand for special school placements. This was approved in 2021 for September 2021 implementation. Part 1 of the consultation is near completion with the special provision offered being re-established. Part 2 is still in development.

Also, in January 2017 the River Centre 3-16 Learning Community was established. This provision is based over three sites primary (Thomas Richard Centre) Secondary (Pontygof) and Stewards House offering 64 places, 40 of which were turn around and 24 places on full time roll.

Early Years and Nursery Provision

The supporting data below shows that there is demand at this early stage of a child's life. Out of the September 2022 cohort of 129 children in early years setting 49 are transferring to nursery and are known to need support. A further 24 children have been awarded funding with a screened application for additional support. These figures can change weekly as there are 3 intakes throughout the year.

It is anticipated that as a targeted solution needs to be developed to create a solution, for children in Early Years to be supported in the mainstream environment.

Additional Learning Needs Provision

The proposal to extend the capacity and undertake physical changes to existing buildings whilst also developing a long-term growth and sustainability plan, would create equality of access to a high-quality ALN provision in a 21st Century learning environment for pupils.

Pupil projections based on current numbers:

Figure 5 - Pupil projections for resource bases at Primary

Primary	Baseline Data	5 Years Projections				
	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28
Places available	61	61	61	61	61	61
Places taken	62	60	63	64	65	67
Leavers	1	10	12	11	11	11
Joiners next year	13	13	13	13	13	13
Total at start of next year	60	63	64	65	67	69
Amount over capacity - demand	-1	2	3	4	6	8

Figure 6 - Pupil projections for resource bases at Secondary

Pupil projections for resource bases at Secondary

Secondary	Baseline Data	5 Years Projections - based on Year 6 pupils				
	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28
Places available	62	62	62	62	62	62
Places taken	66	77	74	69	60	61
Leavers	6	13	17	20	12	17
Joiners next year	17	10	12	11	13	13
Total at start of next year	77	74	69	60	61	57
Amount over capacity	15	13	9	-3	-2	-6
Ebbw Fawr transition group	6	6	6	6	6	6
Amount over capacity - demand	9	6	1	-8	-7	-11

Note: This doesn't take into account potential transfers from Out County placements or the Council's Special Schools

Welsh Medium provision:

Blaenau Gwent does not currently have a Welsh-medium Primary Resource Base for pupils. This will form part of the proposal. All pupils of secondary school age wanting Welsh-medium education receive their education in Torfaen in Ysgol Gymraeg Gwynllyw 3- 19 Learning Community.

Under this proposal a room has been identified within the school for a Resource Base that could accommodate up to 15 pupils. Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg have stated that there are 8 pupils who have ASD/ADHD traits at the school. As yet, not all of the aforementioned pupils have received a formal diagnosis. All except 2, are in receipt of Educational Psychology engagement with referrals having been made. Nursery provision at the school is offered on a full-time basis. Therefore, the pupils needs tend to be identified relatively early on. Currently, in Key Stage 2, there are several pupils who would benefit from small-class teaching.

It is recognised that the provision of a Resource Base would not only provide tailored support to the pupils who have been identified as needing this consistent level of intervention and support; but would also free up teacher time to focus on pupils requiring additional support e.g. pupils with a Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD). Any Resource Base in Blaenau Gwent English medium settings would take children from across other school settings in Blaenau Gwent. However, in the case of a Welsh-medium Resource Base it will only be for children educated through the medium of Welsh.

Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg also have an immersion class set up to support new entrants into Welsh-medium education, which would support parental choice for those pupils who also want to transition into Welsh education.

Options Considered

A detailed option appraisal was undertaken to explore ways in which the requirement for additional ALN provision in the form of ASD and ALN Resource Bases could be addressed for both English and Welsh Medium Education along with primary and secondary need. Factors such as location, site and type of provision were considered.

The long list of options detailed within **Table 2**, were later re-evaluated and a short-list drawn up, so that the benefits, risks, timelines, costs etc. could be explored in much greater detail.

The key factors are securing places in the short to medium-term, which can be delivered over the course of the next five years:

Table 2 – Long List of Options

Options	Description:	Conclusion:
1	Business as usual- maintain the status quo	This is a standard baseline comparator which must be considered, but not an option, as it does not address the identified need. Discounted
2	Build capacity immediately in many settings all at once in both Primary and Secondary Mainstream settings in the County Borough and the River Centre 3-16 Learning Community -Secondary Phase	Merits further consideration, but financial constraints, would not permit effective and timely implementation. Possible
3	Build Capacity (including Welsh Medium places & Faith Based provision) over the next 5 years to increase both Primary and Secondary Mainstream Settings in County Borough and in the River Centre 3-16 Learning Community Secondary setting	Preferred way forward in, this will address Secondary need and Welsh Medium demand Imminently and plan medium and long-term growth. Possible
4	Send Pupils who require support to Out of County Resource Bases	Not enough capacity exists, and this would not support the vision for education in securing localised, accessible and high-quality provision. Also very costly. Discounted
5	Tackle capacity issues in just secondary school settings	Merits further investigation in line with a detailed exploration availability in secondary school buildings and cost implications associated with the delivery, model and vision for ALN. Possible

6	Tackle capacity issues in just Primary school settings	There is currently immediate demand in the secondary sector for places Discounted
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Options 1, 4 and 6 have been discounted as they would potentially:

- Not address the immediate and medium-term need
- Result in increased costs for ALN pupils if they had to be educated out of county
- Cause disruption within the existing education system
- Negatively affect provision and access to specialist facilities and services

The short list included:

- **Option 1** (business as usual)- Maintain the status quo
- **Option 2** Build capacity immediately in many settings all at once in both Primary and Secondary Mainstream.
- **Option 3** Build Capacity (including Welsh Medium places and Faith Based places) over the next 5 years to increase settings in both Primary and Secondary Mainstream
- **Option 5** Tackle capacity issues in just secondary school settings

The Preferred Option

Option 3 – To build capacity (including Welsh Medium places & Faith Based provision) over the next 5 years and increase provision in both Primary and Secondary settings, is the preferred option as this will address the immediate need at secondary provision and Welsh Medium demand and plans for medium and long-term growth and sustainability. Option 2 & Option 5 were not considered the preferred option due to:

- Financial constraints
- Fail to address long term sustainability issues

Risks and Mitigation

Blaenau Gwent Council has a proven track record of managing both school build and school organisation projects – including the requirement to increase school capacity. The following risks can be managed and largely mitigated as follows:

Table 3 – Risks and Mitigation

Risk	Mitigation
If the proposal is not taken forward, there is both a placement and a financial risk in terms of securing suitable Out of County provision for learners	The Local Authority is working closely with key colleagues to provide a local solution that is cost effective and reduces the number of pupils travelling to and accessing already limited Out of County placements. However, the LA has a proven track record of working to secure appropriate placements for learners throughout the region.
The consultation process does not address stakeholder perspective and understanding of the proposal. Therefore, the proposal is not supported and does not progress.	Blaenau Gwent Council's Education Directorate is experienced in and have recently undertaken consultation upon proposals, whilst being fully compliant with the Welsh Government School Organisation Code (Version 2, 2018).

The proposal to expand existing provision is delivered late	Delivery plans are in place and can be facilitated at pace in line with the outcome of the statutory processes associated within this proposal i.e. consultation and statutory notice.
Insufficient capacity for future demand.	The purpose of this proposal is to build extra capacity to meet a previously unforeseen demand and to allow the Council to monitor and explore long-term options to secure sustainable growth.
The projected capital investment costs exceed the budget.	The sites associated with the proposal are well known to the Blaenau Gwent Project team for Sustainable Communities for Learning, and so the cost estimates are based upon actual knowledge and understanding, with a built-in contingency to address any potential unknowns. Budget monitoring is undertaken regularly to inform future plans. Capital funding via the ALN Grant and Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme will be utilised over a 3–5-year period to deliver the proposal.

Benefits of Proposal

This proposal would ensure equality of opportunity for all pupils - particularly those with the greatest level of need, to be educated locally. The proposal further facilitates inclusion and an inclusive approach within Education, ensuring access to high quality specialist education facilities and support for pupils with ALN within the County Borough. It will also go some way to addressing the barriers parents perceive in accessing specialist education and reducing the Council's carbon footprint associated with travel for education purposes.

Should nothing change, the Council will be unable to meet the needs of all learners particularly those with ASD and ALN within Blaenau Gwent. Therefore, they would need to be placed Out of County at significant cost, with learners having to manage longer school journeys affecting families and socialisation for many pupils.

Expected Benefits and Advantages (when compared with the status quo):

- Pupils will be accessing suitable and appropriate provision within their locality;
- Pupils will be accessing suitable and appropriate provision in terms of protected characteristics e.g. faith or language;
- Creation of a local solution which will address the increased demand for ALN provision;
- Continuity and sustainability in terms of local education for pupils with ALN;
- The structure will build confidence and self-esteem in pupils, parents and staff;
- A local option for pupils transitioning from mainstream school to resources bases;
- Reduce the costs of out of county placements for pupils, whilst securing local investment within the Blaenau Gwent school estate;
- Improve access to and facilities for pupils who meet the criteria for ALN provision across the County Borough;
- Increased capacity and sustainability of placement; and
- Reduced travel time and carbon footprint for pupils

Disadvantages:

- Potential parental concerns in relation to placement in Resource Bases; and
- Pupil numbers in schools identified as potential bases may grow if there is any inward migration into the area.

Governance Model

Of the school identified within the proposal (Including Brynmawr Foundation School), the Governing body will have to agree to host an ASD/ALN base and be responsible for the day to day running of the resource base. The Governing Body or the diocese, as relevant, would need to agree to change the characteristics of the school need to agree to the placement of provision and take on the local authority arrangements via the ALN panel for children and young people to be placed.

Learner Travel Arrangements

The Council's Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy 2023/24 states that free home to school transport will be provided as follows:

The Council will provide transport assistance for pupils with ALN:

- if existing transport arrangements are deemed unsuitable in line with pupil needs, alternative arrangements will be determined by the Inclusion ALN Panel;
- if it is not appropriate for the pupils to walk to school due to the nature of their additional learning need and/or disability; and/or,
- if it is determined by ALN Panel that there is no appropriate education provision within the County Borough suitable to meet pupil need.

The above arrangements will be subject to review in line with changes to circumstances relating to the pupil(s) transport requirements.

Pupils requiring Additional Learning Needs (ALN) transport who live:

- over 1.5 miles (for those under 8 years of age); and/or,
- over 2 miles (for those aged between 8-16 years of age)

from their nearest suitable ALN provision, will automatically qualify for free home to school transport. Please note in instances where the school is a parental choice and not the provision determined by the ALN Panel, no transport will be provided.

The Council has established a process in order to assess the travel needs of children who may require ALN transport, as follows:

- All requests to ALN Panel for consideration of change of placement will firstly be considered by the Transport team to determine their eligibility for transport on distance grounds
- The Council's ALN Panel will then consider the request for change of placement, and if agreed, determine the appropriate placement and identify if transport is required to access the agreed placement

Where transport has been agreed, the Transport Officer will contact the parent and inform them of the arrangements. In cases where transport requests are refused, parents/carers will receive notification from the ALN team, also indicating their right of appeal.

The current school location and infrastructure accommodates bus and taxi drop off and pick-up at the start and finish of the school day, with sufficient parking for staff and key partners to visit.

Section 4: Consultation Outcome and Next Steps

Consultation Report: Feedback from the consultation will be collated, analysed and presented in a Consultation Report to the Council's Executive Committee in **June 2023**. The report will be available on the Council's website two weeks prior to a decision being made to publish a statutory notice. Hard copies of the consultation report can be obtained on request via the email addresses detailed above on **page 8**.

Statutory Notice: Should this proposal (or the proposal with the appropriate modifications) be approved at Cabinet; the Council will then publish a statutory notice in **June 2023**. A copy of the statutory notice will be displayed on the Council's website and at any affected school within the County Borough. Hard copies of the statutory notice will be available on request. The statutory notice period will run for 28 days. During this time, you will be able to make formal objections should you wish to do so, as will be explained in the statutory notice. Any issues raised by interested parties will then be summarised in an objection report and presented to the Cabinet for a final decision to be made.

Determination of the Proposal: Blaenau Gwent Council will determine the proposal following the statutory notice period. After considering the responses to the statutory notice. This may lead to the approval, rejection or approval of the proposal with modifications.

Decision Notification: Once a decision has been made, an electronic copy of determination will be sent out to all interested parties and published on Blaenau Gwent Council's website within 7 days of the decision.

Table 4 - The Statutory Process Timeline

April 2023	May 2023	June 2023	June 2023	July 2023	September 2023
Consultation Period					
		Consultation report to Executive Committee			
			Statutory Notice	Objections Report	
			Decision Notification		
					Implementation September 2023 onwards

Section 5: Details of Affected Schools



Schools that are directly affected:

The below schools are directly affected by this proposal:

- St Joseph's R.C. Primary School, Ashvale, Dukestown, Tredegar, NP22 4AQ
- All Saints R.C. Primary School, Heol-yr-Ysgol, Ebbw Vale, NP23 6QP
- St Mary's R.C Primary School, Catholic Road, Brynmawr, NP23 4EF
- Abertillery 3-16 Learning Community, Roseheyworth Road Campus, Roseheyworth Road, Abertillery, NP13 1SR
- Brynmawr Foundation School, Clydach Dingle, Brynmawr, NP23 4XT
- Cwm Primary School, Canning Street, Cwm, Ebbw Vale, NP23 7RD
- Ebbw Fawr 3-16 Learning Community, Secondary Phase, Lime Avenue, Ebbw Vale, NP23 6GL
- Sofrydd Primary School, Sofrydd Road, Sofrydd, NP11 5DW
- Tredegar Comprehensive School, Stable Lane, Tredegar, NP22 4BH
- Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg, Rising Sun Industrial Estate, Blaina, NP13 3DQ

Schools that are in-directly affected:

Schools that already have an ALN Resource Base and/or are connected via an all through school above

- Abertillery 3-16 Learning Community
 - Secondary Campus, Alma Street, Abertillery, NP13 1YL
 - Six Bells Primary Campus, Six Bells Road, Six Bells, NP13 2NJ
- Ebbw Fawr 3-16 Learning Community, Primary Phase, Strand Annealing Lane Ebbw Vale NP23 8XF
- Coed y Garn Primary School, Parrot Row, Blaina, NP13 3AH
- Glanhwy Primary School, Coach Bach, Tredegar, NP22 4RW
- Willowtown Primary School, Brynheulog Street, Ebbw Vale, NP23 6NJ
- Ystruth Primary School, East Pentwyn, Blaina, NP13 3XG

The below information contains all schools that feeds into a secondary school under this proposal and has been broken down into areas below:

Tredegar Area:

- Bryn Bach Primary School, Merthyr Road, Tredegar, NP22 3RX
- Deighton Primary School, Stockton Way, Tredegar, NP22 3ES
- Georgetown Primary School, Oakfield Road, Tredegar, NP22 4LP

Ebbw Fawr area:

- Beaufort Hill Primary School, Bangor Road, Beaufort, Ebbw Vale, NP23 5QG
- Glymcoed Primary School, Badminton Grove, Ebbw Vale, NP23 5UL
- Rhos y Fedwen Primary School, Honeyfield Road, Rassau, Ebbw Vale, NP23 5TA

Ebbw Fach area:

- St Illtyds Primary School, Llanhilleth, Abertillery, NP13 2JT
- St Mary's C.I.W Primary School, Intermediate Road, Brynmawr, NP23 4SF
- Blaen y Cwm Primary School, Blaenafon Road, Brynmawr, NP23 4BR

Surplus Capacity Statement

Blaenau Gwent schools' capacity for September 2022 shows that there is sufficient space in our mainstream schools to support the development of an ALN resource base in both Primary and Secondary settings.

- In Primary overall there is 13% surplus spaces (places 5813 numbers on roll 5060)
- In Secondary overall there is 12% surplus places (places 3463 number on roll 3033)

Both our primary and secondary surplus places are at the lower percentage of an Amber position as per Welsh Governments data sets (between 10% - 24%).

There will be no direct impact from this proposal for Pen y Cwm Special school.

Section 6: Other Considerations

Finance

Revenue Costs

In increasing provision in Resource Bases there will be a revenue implication associated with the proposal. All schools are funded in accordance with Blaenau Gwent Council's Fair Funding policy and will receive resources on the same basis as any other school within Blaenau Gwent, based upon pupil numbers and the area of the school building. It is difficult to accurately project the costs associated within the capacity increase, due to the following variables:

- the reduction in funding for mainstream settings as a result of pupil placement,
- the level of cost avoidance as a result of pupil placement within Out of County settings from within Blaenau Gwent; and finally,
- the level of recoupment realised as a result of Out of County placement within existing resource bases.

Blaenau Gwent currently has 11 pupils (2022/23) that are educated outside the Local Authority in Independent Settings and a further 13 CLA pupils that would be placed in the nearest school to the LA in which they reside (foster/residential care) at a cost of circa £600,000. The budget for 2023/24 is expected to be £720,000.

Revenue costs associated with Phase 1 of the project are anticipated to be in the region of £756,973 (breakdown). These figures are based on the 2023/24 price base.

per annum

- 2023/24 £73,184
- 2024/25 £241,003
- 2025/26 £442,786

In years 2023/24 & 2024/25 it is anticipated the increased costs will be financed from ALN Implementation grants and the SEN reserve. From 2025/26, it is anticipated the proposal will begin to impact on the requirement for Out County placements therefore reducing this expenditure and allowing funding to be vired accordingly. However, there may be a requirement for short term cost pressures/invest to save funding to be awarded until the financial impact of reducing out of county placements materialises as pupils leave the system. Any cost pressures/invest to save funding will be proposed as part of the standards budget setting process.

If these pupils are not placed locally in a resource base, then they would need to be placed in Out County placements which could see these annual costs incrementally increase in line with the projected demand by approximately £1.3m by the 2025/26 financial year.

The revenue costs associated with Phase 2 will be considered in full once Phase 1 has been implemented and the impact assessed.

Transport Costs

Costs associated with home to school transport are increasing. The 2022/23 forecast transport costs associated with:

- Out of County placement are £247,352
- ALN bases attached to Primary school provision £286,008.74
- ALN bases attached to Secondary School Provision £226,652.30

Across all ALN offered provision, the costs associated with an academic year can be as high as £654,508.65, (excluding Pen Y Cwm Special School costs) this is dependent on the number of children requiring transport. These costs are regularly reviewed and subject to change in line with pupil placement. Should the proposal be implemented the Council would see an incremental reduction in the transport costs associated with Out County placements every year.

Capital Costs

The proposals will involve the remodelling of areas in the schools identified that can accommodate new provision already within the existing footprint of the schools, There are capital financial implications associated with this proposal for the Council, which are circa £570,000 over a 3–5-year period.

- Phase 1 £300,000
- Phase 2 £270,000

This will be met via contributions from within the ALN Grant and an element of Sustainable Communities for Learning Band B Programme over a five-year period. This figure is based on the assumption that the below table is applied over Phase 1 & Phase 2 of the proposal:

Table 5 – Potential breakdown of capital costs per individual school Resource Base

Funding Stream	School	Capital Works	Fixtures/ Furnishings and Sensory equipment
Secondary:			
ALN funding	Ebbw Fawr 3-16 Learning Community – Secondary Campus	0	0
ALN Funding	Tredegar Comprehensive School	£90,0000	£40,000
ALN Funding	Brynmawr Foundation School	£100,000	£30,000

Primary:			
SCfL	Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg (Welsh-medium)	£100,000	£20,000
ALN Funding	Sofrydd Primary School	£20,000	£20,000
ALN Funding	Abertillery 3-16 Learning Community Roseheyworth Road Primary Campus	£20,000	£20,000
ALN Funding	Cwm Primary School	£90,000	£30,000
ALN Funding	Faith Based Primary School yet to be determined	£20,000	£20,000

Capital Costs/Capital Receipts

Should the proposal be approved, it will address the current shortfall in capacity for the Resource Bases in mainstream education. There will be capital costs associated with the proposal in facilitating the remodelling work within existing school building. However, the proposal will not involve the transfer of buildings or sale of any building. The proposal will be managed within existing building layouts.

Admission Arrangements

Admission to any ALN provision, whether it be a Resource Base in Mainstream Education or at a Specialist schools (Pen y Cwm Special School and The River Centre 3-16 Learning Community) is managed via the ALN Panel within the Inclusion Services Team, which is made up of representatives from schools, the Inclusion Service and wider Education representatives including the Education Psychologists. Referrals to the ALN Panel are made directly to the ALN team.

Impact of the Proposal on the Welsh Language

This proposal will impact positively on the provision of ALN for Welsh-medium pupils in Blaenau Gwent. Currently Blaenau Gwent only has one Welsh-medium primary school with another 210-place school building being ready for occupation in 2024. The Council's Welsh in Education 10-year Strategic Plan 2022-32 (WESP) aims to improve ALN provision for Welsh learners in the County Borough and this proposal will support the Council's directive. The school has identified 8 pupils, that could be supported via this proposal and the space within the school identified can accommodate 15 pupils which would create space for future needs of pupils with ALN.

Equality Impact Assessment

An Equality Impact Screening Assessment has been undertaken in order to assess the impact of key proposals and decisions upon protected characteristics. The assessment determined that none of the protected characteristics will be negatively affected, whilst ALN pupils will be positively affected (Please refer to **Webpage via link** <https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/en/council/consultations/proposal-to-improve-provision-and-build-capacity-for-additional-learning-needs/> for more information).

Community and Welsh Language Impact Assessment

A community impact assessment has been undertaken in order to assess the impact of key proposals and decisions upon stakeholders and the wider community (Please refer to **Appendix 4** for more information).

United Nation Convention Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

The Council in all its corporate responsibilities ensure that they will always engage positively with children and young people. If this proposal is implemented, it will realise benefits for children and

young people in accordance with the seven core aims of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, specifically:

Core aim 1 – have a flying start in life;

Core aim 2 – have a comprehensive range of education and learning opportunities;

Core aim 3 – enjoy the best possible health and are free from abuse, victimisation and exploitation;

Core aim 4 – have access to play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities;

Core aim 5 – are listened to, treated with respect, and have their race and cultural identity recognised;

Core aim 6 – have a safe home and a community which supports physical and emotional wellbeing; and

Core aim 7 – are not disadvantaged by poverty.

Engagement of Children and Young People in this Consultation

As part of this consultation process, the Education Transformation team in partnership with schools, will consult with pupils that are affected by the proposal, as well as engaging with both the Blaenau Gwent Youth Forum and Schools Grand Council.

Housing Developments

Over the course of the last 2 years, 235 houses (132 in 2020/21 and 103 in 2021/22) have been built in Blaenau Gwent. The below table projects the level of growth and is expected to continue. These potential homes either already have planning permission, are seeking legal agreement or are included in the Local Development Plan. This is likely to have an impact upon pupil place planning. The Education Transformation team monitor the impact upon schools.

Figure 7 Below - illustrates the number of housing developments which are currently in the Local Development Plan (LDP)

	According to the Housing Land Availability Study which looks at a 5-year timescale the following figures are identified for Tredegar Valley .					According to the Housing Land Availability Study which looks at a 5-year timescale the following figures are identified for Ebbw Fawr Valley .					According to the Housing Land Availability Study which looks at a 5 year timescale the following figures are identified for Ebbw Fach Valley .				
	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Housing Associations:	0	0	0	0	0	23	15	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Private Sector Housing:	3	19	19	37	1	3	5	5	5	5	7	7	6	6	6
Total	3	19	19	37	1	26	20	25	5	5	7	7	6	6	6

The above data tells us that there are over 192 housing developments planned between 2022 – 2026. There is a potential for this to increase demand within both mainstream and special schools going forward with inward migration of families.

Human Resources

There are HR implications arising from the proposal. The proposal means that as there is an increase in pupil numbers entering ALN Resource Bases, the schools concerned with new provision will require the Governing Bodies of each school affected to plan for the workforce requirements in readiness for the respective extension.

The Council's Organisational Development Division will provide advice, support and guidance to the Governing Bodies for the workforce planning and consequential recruitment processes. Where the Governing Bodies have adopted the Council's School Redeployment and Redundancy Policy, any new vacancies arising as a consequence of an increase in numbers on roll will provide opportunities for school-based staff on the school redeployment register.

Partnerships

The 'Blaenau Gwent We Want' engagement programme is about local people, businesses and organisations having a say on how we can improve Blaenau Gwent for our future generations. In its 1st year the group have already engaged with over 1,500 people from throughout Blaenau Gwent to find out what they would like the area to be like in the future. Their feedback has been used to help us put together a number of priorities that we will work on over the next few years to help us create the Blaenau Gwent that we all want.

In its second year the Partnership Strategic Board's progress, they have continued to reflect on how we are doing and what we have been focussing on demonstrating that we are an ambitious and learning board. In this respect we have reviewed our programme of work and taken on a number of exciting new projects including ones to address climate change and food inequality.

Looking to the future we will also be taking stock on the impact COVID-19 has had on our communities and what it means for any changes we might need to make on our well-being plan for the area.

Our Well-Being Plan outlines our objectives for improving well-being in Blaenau Gwent and meeting our duties under the Wellbeing Future Generations Act (2015). The 5 objectives in the plan have been developed to reflect that Blaenau Gwent Wants:

- The best start in life for everyone
- Safe and friendly communities
- To look after and protect the natural environment
- To forge new pathways to prosperity
- To encourage healthy lifestyles

These well-being objectives are ones we consider having real power to bring about change, that are the most urgent and that the evidence tells us need the combined force of the Public Services Board partners to deliver and improve well-being.

Section 7: Present Arrangements



Estyn

ESTYN

Schools are inspected as part of a national programme of school inspection. The purpose of an inspection is to identify good features and shortcomings in schools in order that they may improve the quality of education offered and raise standards achieved by their pupils (Estyn).

Appendix 5 shows the latest Estyn results for the schools included in this proposal along with **Appendix 6** any recommendations.

In terms of this proposal please see an overall assessment below on the core themes from the Estyn inspection framework

Quality and Standards in Education: The quality and standards of schools in Blaenau Gwent are monitored by the Council, in line with the national system of school categorisation and guidance in respect of schools causing concern. Estyn is the Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales and is established under the 1992 Education Act. Standards and the quality of provision are also monitored periodically through the Estyn Inspection Framework for the inspection of schools.

Since 2012, the Council has commissioned the Education Achievement Service (EAS) to support school improvement in Blaenau Gwent's schools. The EAS provide school improvement support to the following Councils: Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen. As part of this proposal, the Council will work in partnership with the EAS to secure increased levels of support for the schools.

Standards: The proposal will not affect the standards in any of the school buildings proposed for resource bases in the County Borough. The schools will continue to receive the appropriate level of challenge and support in terms of their new ALN provision from the Council's Inclusion team as well as the EAS.

Wellbeing and Attitudes to Learning: The provision of additional pupil places in resource bases is expected to enable more children to attend school in their local community. Pupil wellbeing is a priority for the Inclusion team and Council which is monitored and reported via the ALN Panel. The proposal will not impact wellbeing and attitudes towards learning.

Teaching and Learning Experiences: The teaching in Resource Bases proposed in this consultation document will follow the national curriculum with English as the language of teaching and learning. It is also prudent to note that under this proposal the Council will be establishing its first Welsh-medium provision for Welsh learners in Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg which has been identified as a gap previously. This proposal will not impact negatively on teaching and learning experiences.

Care, Support and Guidance: All schools in Blaenau Gwent have highly effective policies and strategies for promoting care, support and guidance that have a strong emphasis on supporting pupils' behaviour, communication and emotional wellbeing. As a result, nearly all pupils behave well and engage enthusiastically in their learning across the County Borough. The proposal can offer an appropriate range of activities that link well to pupils' interests and abilities. The proposal will promote pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development effectively.

The majority of our schools with existing Resource Based provision work closely with external agencies ensuring effective collaboration planning that will support and advise staff about individual pupils' needs. This is also paramount to the new Resource Bases being established under this proposal.

Leadership and Management: The Inclusion Team and headteacher of the proposed Resource Bases will have a clear vision and high expectations for the proposed provision. In current provisions there is clear and effective communication with governors, pupils, parents and staff via the Inclusion Team. The senior leadership teams are and will be effective, understand their roles and responsibilities and undertake their work efficiently.

Impact of the proposal

Should the proposal be approved, it will continue to provide a high-quality learning environment in support of enhanced outcomes for all ALN pupils that require placement in Resource Bases in mainstream settings. The proposal will ensure that the already excellent standards in our current settings will also be maintained. Much research and ALN reform has demonstrated that pupils achieve better outcomes when they are fully engaged in learning and in an environment that is suitable for their needs.

Section 8: Overview of the Proposal

Table 6 below details Phase 1 of the proposal including the category, language, age range and other relevant details in relation to the proposed new ALN provisions:

New proposed Resource Base				
	Ebbw Fawr 3-16 Learning Community – Secondary Phase	Tredegar Comprehensive School	Sofrydd Primary School	Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg
Admission number and arrangements	Admissions to Resource Bases are co-ordinated by Blaenau Gwent’s Inclusion team on the basis of need.			
Age range	11-16	11-16	3-11	3-11
Pupil places in Resource Base	6	6-8	10	10-15
Capacity of the school	1191	767	162	215
Location	Lime Avenue, Ebbw Vale NP23 6GL	Stable Lane, Tredegar NP22 4BH	Sofrydd Road, Sofrydd NP11 5DW	Rising Sun Ind Estate, Blaina NP13 3DQ
Category school and language	Community English Medium	Community English Medium	Community English Medium	Community Welsh Medium
Transport arrangements and policy	Transport will be delivered in accordance with the Blaenau Gwent Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy 2023/24. Please refer to Section ? for more information.			
Cost per Pupil 2021/22	£5,649	£5,591	£5,386	£4,981

Results of Estyn Inspections	Please see results and recommendations in Appendix 6 Page 38-39 & 7 Page 40-41			
Building Condition Categorisation	A	B	C	B
Building Suitability Categorisation	A	A/B	C	B
Schedule of accommodation	Rooms to be determined post consultation and capital investment			

Table 7 below details Phase 2 of the proposal including the category, language, age range and other relevant details in relation to the proposed new ALN provisions:

New proposed Resource Base				
	Brynmawr Foundation School	Abertillery 3-16 Learning Community Roseheyworth Road Primary Campus	Faith Based Primary School location	Cwm Primary School
Admission number and arrangements	Admissions to Resource Bases are co-ordinated by Blaenau Gwent's Inclusion team on the basis of need.			
Age range	11-16	3-11	3-11	3-11
Pupil places in Resource Base	10	10	10	10
Capacity of the school	820	980 for whole primary sites	n/k	210
Location	Intermediate Road, Brynmawr NP23 4XT	Roseheyworth Road, Abertillery. NP13 1SR	Yet to be determined	Canning Street Cwm, Ebbw Vale NP23 7RD
Category school and language	Foundation English Medium	Community English Medium	Voluntary Aided English Medium	Community English Medium
Transport arrangements and policy	Transport will be delivered in accordance with the Blaenau Gwent Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy 2023/24. Please refer to Section 1 for more information.			
Cost per Pupil 2021/22	£5,056	£5,449	n/k	£5,837
Results of Estyn Inspections	Please see results and recommendations in Appendix 6 (page 38-39) & 7 (Page 40-41)			
Building Condition Categorisation	C	B	n/k	C
Building Suitability Categorisation	C	B	n/k	C
Schedule of accommodation	Rooms to be determined post consultation and capital investment			

School Catchment Area

The Resource Base catchment area covers all of the County Borough. The placement of pupils in bases will depend on the needs of the pupils. This will not change as part of this proposal.

Transition Arrangements

There will be no change for pupils, currently in any of the Resource Bases or Special Schools in the existing county borough bases.

Section 9: Consultation Pro-forma

Consultation Questionnaire

Please provide your comments on the proposal in this consultation document to extend the capacity for pupils in Resource Bases by establishing and changing the ALN provision in a number of Primary and Secondary Schools across the County Borough. You may also wish to indicate which of the following reflects your views:

This can be done in 3 ways:

1. Via the link provided electronically via: <https://online1.snapsurveys.com/d1daqu>
2. Via the below proforma and send to: 21stcenturyschools@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

I fully support the proposal	
I partially support the proposal	
I do not support the proposal	

Your comments:

Name: _____ Date: _____

E-mail: _____

Address: _____ Postcode: _____

Please indicate if you are:

Primary: Teacher/Non-Teaching School Staff / Governor / Parent / Pupil /Local Resident / Other (please state) _____

Secondary: Teacher/Non-Teaching School Staff / Governor / Parent / Pupil /Local Resident / Other (please state) _____

3. Send by mail to Joanne Watts Service Manager - Education Transformation and Business Change, Education Department, Floor 8 Anvil Court, Abertillery, NP13 1DB

Thank you for your time and contribution to the consultation. Your views, comments and responses will be recorded and reported to the Council's Executive Committee in the Consultation Outcome Report.

All comments to be received no later than 5:00pm on Tuesday 6th June 2023

Appendix 1 - Distribution List for the Consultation Document

Parents (and where possible prospective parents) carers and guardians, and staff members of schools affected by the proposals	The Welsh Ministers
In the case of proposals affecting secondary provision, parents of pupils attending primary schools from which pupils normally transfer to that secondary school	Constituency and Regional Assembly Members (AMs) and Members of Parliament (MP's) representing the area served by/intended to be served by any school which is the subject of the proposals
The maintaining or proposed maintaining authority for any school likely to be affected by the proposals	ESTYN
Any other local authority (including those in England where appropriate) likely to be affected – including in the case of dedicated ALN provision, any authority placing or likely to place pupils with ALN in it to distribute to schools in their areas as appropriate	Teaching and staff trade unions (NUT; NASUWT; ATL; UCAC; UNISON; GMB) representing teachers and other staff at any school which is the subject of the proposals
The Church in Wales and Roman Catholic Diocesan Authority for the area in which any school likely to be affected is located	The relevant Regional Education Consortium
Any other appropriate religious body for any school likely to be affected by the proposals	The Police and Crime Commissioner for the area served by/intended to be served by any school which is the subject of the proposals
The Governing body of any school which is the subject of the proposals	Any community or town council for the area served by/intended to be served by any school which is the subject of the proposals
The Governing body of other schools which the proposer consider are likely to be affected by the proposal;	In the case of proposals affecting nursery provision, any independent or voluntary providers who may be affected including Mudiad Meithrin. Also all Registered Private/Voluntary Early Years Settings /Providers in Blaenau Gwent;
In the case of proposals affecting nursery provision, the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships where present	In the case of proposals affecting ALN provision, any relevant health or third sector bodies with an interest
In the case of proposals affecting secondary provision, any further education institutions serving the area of the school (Coleg Gwent)	In the case of proposals affecting Welsh Language provision, the Welsh Language Commissioner

In addition to the above, the following are also included in the distribution:

The Headteacher of each school maintained by Blaenau Gwent LEA	Other Directorates of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
All Elected Members of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	Blaenau Gwent Association of School Governors
The Careers Service	Libraries
RhAG (Parents for Welsh Medium Education)	SNAP Cymru

Appendix 2 – Summary of schools locations, Pupil Numbers and Projections

School	All Through Schools (3-16)							Primary Schools																	Secondary Schools		Special School Provision			
	Abertillery Learning Community				Ebbw Fawr Learning																				River Centre 3-16 Learning					
	Secondary Campus	Roadleyworth Road Primary Campus	St Silas Primary Campus	Tilley Street Primary Campus	Primary Phase	Secondary Phase	All Saints R.C	Beech Hill	Blessy Owen	Braybath	Coed y Gam	Owen	Doughton	Georgetown	Glanhowy	Glyncroed	Rhosy Felwen	St Joseph R.C.	St Mary CIW	St Mary's R.C.	Sedfield	Willowton	Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg	Yerfath	Brynnew Foundation	Tredgar Composite	Primary Setting	Secondary Setting	Stowards House	Pen Y Cwm
Location of School	Ebbw Fawr	Ebbw Fawr	Ebbw Fawr	Ebbw Fawr	Ebbw Vale	Ebbw Vale	Ebbw Vale	Ebbw Vale	Ebbw Vale	Tredgar	Ebbw Fawr	Ebbw Vale	Tredgar	Tredgar	Tredgar	Ebbw Vale	Ebbw Vale	Tredgar	Ebbw Fawr	Ebbw Fawr	Ebbw Fawr	Ebbw Vale	Ebbw Fawr	Ebbw Fawr	Ebbw Fawr	Tredgar	Tredgar	Ebbw Vale	Ebbw Vale	Ebbw Vale
School Category, Community, Voluntary /Controlled /Voluntary Aided/ Foundation	C	C	C	C	C	C	VIA	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	VIA	C	VIA	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	B	C
Language English, Welsh-medium	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	
Capacity (Sept 22)	750	980			284	1191	188	210	270	210	210	210	420	298	320		177	107	210	210	182	420	215	294	820	787	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Nursery Capacity (Jan 23)	N/A	45	26	41	58	N/A																		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Numbers on Roll as at Jan (inc of	2019				N/A	N/A	179	214	271	192	197	183	164	378	265	265	122	99	207	174	148	381	208	278	701	684	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	2020	654	176		238	940	176	200	251	202	175	180	175	381	251	301	121	93	204	178	142	378	223	282	655	688	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	2021	705	795		244	1011	177	205	239	204	180	178	187	386	232	305	126	97	198	175	136	385	220	284	620	745	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	2022	690	788		224	1069	176	202	232	200	180	172	195	400	238	293	109	95	208	178	131	398	222	291	559	706	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	2023	722	780		233	1103		200	240	206	155	175	201	392	248	313	94				120	415		295	584	729	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	2024	737	780		228	1119		201	232	194	156	177	205	384	245	281	101				106	406		300	532	740	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	2025	750	789		221	1122		195	244	195	153	172	208	388	245	258	109				100	417		290	535	772	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	2026	735	728		231	1073		196	238	192	169	173	206	356	265	230	110				97	406		296	533	781	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	2027	712	741		238	1019		198	258	180	166	178	202	342	289	218	129				80	403		288	538	784	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Appendix 3 – Schedule of Accommodation Condition Surveys and Facilities overview

		All Through Schools (3-16)		Primary Schools																Secondary		Special School Provision										
		Abertillery Learning Community		Ebbw Fawr Learning Community																		Secondary		River Centre 3-16 Learning Community								
		Secondary Campus	Roseleyworth Road Campus	Six Bells Campus	Tilley Street Campus	Primary Phase	Secondary Phase	All Saints R.C.	Blenfontaine	Bluen Y Cwm	Bryn Barah	Coed Y Gwm	Cwm	Dreighton	Georgetown	Glanhowy	Glyncod	Rhos-y-Fedwen	St Illtyd's	St Joseph's R.C.	St Mary's R.C.	St Mary's C.I.W	Sodrydai	Willowdown	Ysgol Gymreig Bicolwyg	Ystruth	Brynawr Foundation	Tredingar Comprehensive	Primary setting	Secondary setting	Steward House	Pen Y Cwm Special School
School	Condition Survey	C	B	A	A	A	C	B	B	B/C	B	C	B	B	C	D* new build open Sept 2024	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B/C	C	B	C	A* just completed remodelling	B	A
Facilities Schedule of Existing Site	Nursery		/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
	Classrooms/ Shared teaching areas	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
	Staffroom	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
	Headteachers office	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
	Reception	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
	Storage	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
	Multi-purpose use/Hall	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
	Kitchen	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
	Cloakroom	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/

Appendix 4 – ALN Resource Base Community Impact Assessment

Community Impact Assessments are a structured way for the Council to fully understand the implications of our decisions and whether they are detrimental or discriminatory to certain groups or sections of the community. They help us to consider the impact of Council decisions and policies within and between communities more generally. The Community Impact Assessment process will ensure that our decision-making process is robust and impacts on all communities within Blaenau Gwent ensuring that they are fully considered in Council decision making processes. By carrying out impact assessments, the Council is working to promote equality for all our service users, employees and the wider community that we serve.

There are 7 Resource Rases in the County Borough. For ease of information they have been split into the three distinct valleys.

Ebbw Fawr area	Ebbw Fach area	Tredegar area
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ebbw Fawr 3-16 Learning Community – Secondary Campus ○ Willowtown Primary School 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Abertillery 3-16 Learning Community – Six Bells Primary Campus and Secondary Campus ○ Ystruth Primary School ○ Coed y Garn Primary School 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Glanhowy Primary School

The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) updated in 2019 analysis and describes the patterns seen in Wales between different deep-rooted deprivation categories.

The Proportion of young children in income deprivation in each local authority, trend overtime from 2012-2013 to 2016-2017 [Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019: deprivation analysis relating to young children | GOV.WALES](#) shows that in Blaenau Gwent 2012/13 there was an average of 41 children in comparison to 2016/17 of 37 this is still significantly higher that the Welsh Average of 30 in 2012/13 and 28 in 2016/17. The proportion of young children in income deprivation in Wales decreased year on year from 30% in 2012-13 to 27% in 2015-16, however the deprivation rate has since increased slightly to 28% in 2016-17.

Proposed Development:

If approved the proposal would secure an additional 43 places for pupils in phase 1 alone requiring a place in a Council run Resource Base. Phase 2 could see another potential 30 places in primary and 10 in secondary settings. The increase would bring significant benefits to current and new pupils requiring placements along with benefits for the wider community and families of pupils having closer provision available to them.

Proportion of Pupils:

The Council's proposal seeks to ensure a continued high quality learning environment for pupils that require ALN provision, by extending the capacity of mainstream setting Resource Bases in order to cater for many of the County Borough's pupils who are/or would otherwise be placed Out of County in line with their needs and/or availability and sufficiency of pupil places. The chosen locations have been decided on mainstream school building capacity to locate resource bases across the borough and the need for more ASD resource in the River Centre 3-16 Learning Community Secondary setting.

There are approximately 2 pupils from outside the County Borough being educated at primary and secondary Resource Bases in the County Borough. This represents less than 2.2% of the total allocation of places with the majority of its pupils, residing within Blaenau Gwent. Future availability of places for "out of county" pupils will be subject to demand from within Blaenau Gwent in the first instance.

Current facilities and/or services offered:

As part of the consultation document there is a full list of facilities recorded against all school that will be affected by the proposal. In forming Resource Bases there will be an added component for a sensory room as part of each Resource Base developed.

Travel Time:

Given the proposal is to remodel rooms on existing mainstream sites there will be no impact on travel distances for existing pupils. As the catchment area for ALN places covers the entire County Borough, the maximum distance likely to be travelled is no more than 8 miles, approximately 20 minutes by car/bus. Distances/travelling times will increase for those pupils with a placement from further afield.

How would parents' and pupils' engage should the proposal be agreed?

The Council recognises the importance of an effective and smooth transition process to ensure there is little, if any disruption should the proposal to expand capacity of Resource Bases in its mainstream setting and River Centre 3-16 Learning Community setting be approved. The Inclusion team will form part of the project team to collaboratively contribute to the overall development of new provisions.

Parents/carers and pupils will be provided with relevant information to aid their understanding of the proposal and the most appropriate support they can offer their children during the period of transition. The Inclusion team and school representatives will also work together with other services and where necessary, in identifying families who may need additional support. Parental and community engagement will remain a key priority throughout this process.

The wider implications the changes would have on public transport provisions:

The proposal is not expected to have any significant implications for public transport provision in the area given pupils' transport is largely provided by contracted vehicles.

Wider community safety issues:

The proposal would have no direct impact on the wider community, places in Resource Bases will be offered to meet pupils needs.

- The existing Resources Bases will remain in their current locations.
- It will benefit families of pupils who require ALN Resource Base places by their child having the education within the County Borough within which they reside.
- No significant safety issues are anticipated.

What would be the impact on health and well-being?

With the creation of additional Resource Bases it will positively impact on pupil's health and wellbeing. With smaller numbers in the classrooms the focus is on pupils and their needs, so the proposal will have a very positive impact on the health and wellbeing of those who attend, who will have access to the highest standard in terms of facilities, education and care.

Transport Impact Assessment:

The Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 places a duty on the Council to assess the travel needs of pupils under the age of 19. In addition to those pupils who qualify for free transport provision due to meeting the eligibility criteria, the Council is under a legal obligation to assess the travel needs of pupils who walk to school. There will likely be an impact upon transport and travel, however, any implications on transport arrangements will be more positive than if the Council were to use provision from outside of the Borough to meet the pupil's needs.

Staff Impact Assessment:

There will be no impact on existing staff albeit the increase in capacity in new Resource Bases may provide new and different opportunity to recruit additional staff. Nevertheless, in addition to their role as statutory consultees, meaningful consultation will take place with any affected staff and recognised trade unions on the possible impact and outcome of the statutory consultation. Discussions will take place through agreed joint consultative processes with recognised trade unions (JCC) and collective consultation.

Additional Learning Needs Provision:

This proposal specifically addresses sufficiency issues in relation to the number of places available for pupils with ALN in the Borough and will therefore, have a positive impact.

Appendix 5 -Estyn Inspection results

School & date last inspection	Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?		Key Question 2: How good is provision?				Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?			
	Standards	Wellbeing	Learning experiences:	Teaching:	Care, support and guidance:	Learning environment:	Leadership:	Improving quality:	Partnership working:	Resource management:
Abertillery 3-16 Learning Community 2018 inspection	Adequate needs improvement	Adequate needs improvement	Adequate needs improvement	Adequate needs improvement	Adequate needs improvement		Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement			
Coed Y Garn Primary School 2022 Report	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Glanhowy Primary School 2018 Report	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good		Good			
Willowtown Primary School 2017 Report	Adequate	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Adequate
Ystruth Primary School 2017 Report	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Ebbw Fawr 3-16 Learning Community 2016 Report	Good	Unsatisfactory	Good	Adequate	Unsatisfactory	Good	Adequate	Adequate	Good	Adequate

Tredegar Comprehensive School 2016 Report	Good	Excellent	Good	Good	Good	Excellent	Good	Good	Excellent	Good
Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg 2020 Report	Good	Good	Good	Adequate	Good		Good			
Sofrydd Primary School 2016 Report	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Excellent	Good
River Centre 3-16 Learning Community Secondary Campus 2022 Report										
Brynmawr Foundation School 2019 Report	Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement	Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement	Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement	Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement	Adequate and needs improvement		Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement			
Cwm Primary School 2020 Report	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good		Good			

Estyn Reports via links:

Abertillery 3-16 Learning Community - ALC Estyn Report 2018	Tredegar Comprehensive School- Tredegar Comp Estyn Report 2016
Coed y Garn Primary School - Coed -y- Garn Primary Estyn Report 2022	Brynmawr Foundation School - Brynmawr Foundation Estyn Report 2019
Glanhowy Primary School - Glanhowy Estyn Report 2018	Sofrydd Primary School - Sofrydd Estyn Report 2016
Willowtown Primary School- Willowtown Estyn Report 2017	River Centre 3-16 Learning Community - The River Centre Estyn Report 2022
Ystruth Primary School- Ystruth Estyn Report 2017	Cwm Primary School- Cwm Primary Estyn Report 2019
Ebbw Fawr 3-16 Learning Community - EFLC Estyn report 2016	Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg - Ysgol Bro Helyg Estyn Report 2020

Appendix 6 – Estyn Inspection Recommendations

School	Recommendations for Improvement:
Abertillery 3-16 Learning Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ R1 Improve standards, in particular outcomes at the end of key stage 4. ➤ R2 Improve standards of behaviour in the secondary phase. ➤ R3 Improve the quality of teaching. ➤ R4 Improve planning for progression of skills, including the Welsh language, and the breadth of the secondary phase curriculum. ➤ R5 improve the quality and impact of leadership at all levels, including in self-evaluation and planning for improvement. ➤ R6 Provide robust financial management to address the deficit budget.
Coed Y Garn Primary School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ R1 Address the issues related to the school site, identified at the time of the inspection ➤ R2 Challenge all pupils through consistent and effective teaching ➤ R3 Ensure that teachers provide opportunities for extended independent writing ➤ R4 Ensure that teachers' feedback moves individual pupils on to the next stage in their learning effectively
Glanhowy Primary School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ R1 Improve spelling and standards of handwriting. ➤ R2 Raise standards in use of oral Welsh. ➤ R3 Ensure that pupils understand more clearly what they should achieve during lessons in key stage 2. ➤ R4 Ensure assessment is consistent and accurate when judging higher levels of attainment.
Willowtown Primary School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ R1 Improve standards of reading and writing. ➤ R2 Improve standards in Welsh. ➤ R3 Provide pupils with opportunities to develop their numeracy skills in subjects across the curriculum. ➤ R4 Share best practice in teaching and learning across the school more effectively. ➤ R5 Ensure that there is appropriate and effective use of the pupil deprivation grant.
Ystruth Primary School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ R1 Improve pupils' competence in speaking Welsh. ➤ R2 Provide further opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum. ➤ R3 Improve the balance between child-initiated and adult-directed activities in the Foundation Phase ➤ R4 Improve the clarity of targets within individual education plans to better meet the requirements of pupils with additional learning needs.
Ebbw Fawr 3-16 Learning Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ R1 Improve the implementation of the school's procedures for safeguarding pupils' wellbeing in the secondary phase, by dealing effectively with any incidence of bullying. ➤ R2 Improve pupils' independent learning and oracy skills in the secondary phase. ➤ R3 Improve the quality of teaching, especially in the secondary phase. ➤ R4 Ensure that self-evaluation and improvement planning draw on the whole range of evidence gathered by the school. ➤ R5 Reduce the rate of fixed-term exclusions in the secondary phase. ➤ R6 Ensure that the school meets requirements for the daily act of collective worship in the secondary phase.

Tredegar Comprehensive School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ R1 Improve standards in English at key stage 4. ➤ R2 Ensure that all self-evaluation activities focus consistently on pupil standards and progress.
Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ R1 Ensure that teaching and learning experiences develop the independence of all pupils in the foundation phase consistently. ➤ R2 Improve provision to develop pupils' ICT skills across the school. ➤ R3 Strengthen self-evaluation and planning for improvement procedures in order to prioritise and address the most important areas.
Sofrydd Primary School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ R1 Improve pupils' spelling, punctuation, handwriting and the presentation of their work. ➤ R2 Develop the roles of the school and eco councils by giving members more responsibility. ➤ R3 Improve opportunities for pupils in the Foundation Phase to choose activities and to develop more independence in their learning. ➤ R4 Improve opportunities for older pupils to read in Welsh.
River Centre 3-16 Learning Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ R1 Address those issues identified in the health and safety letter. ➤ R2 Establish a clear purpose and vision for the school and implement a staffing structure that is fit for purpose and adequately reflects roles and responsibilities. ➤ R3 Ensure that the curriculum is sufficiently engaging, broad and balanced and prepares pupils well for their next stage in life and learning. ➤ R4 Improve the behaviour of pupils, particularly on the secondary campus. ➤ R5 Improve the quality of the learning environment and culture, particularly on the secondary campus ➤ R6 Improve the outcomes for pupils, particularly those on the secondary campus. ➤ R7 Establish systems, procedures and routines across the school that are clearly understood by staff and relevant partners.
Brynmawr Foundation School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ R1 Improve pupils' standards across the school, including their literacy and numeracy skills. ➤ R2 Improve pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning. ➤ R3 Improve the effectiveness of teaching to motivate, engage and challenge pupils to make good progress in lessons. ➤ R4 Strengthen leadership at all levels to improve leaders' ability to identify areas for development and to plan effectively for improvement.
Cwm Primary School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ R1 Ensure that pupils in the foundation phase have meaningful opportunities to develop as independent learners. ➤ R2 Ensure that teachers match activities to the needs of pupils of all abilities, particularly the least able. ➤ R3 Improve the quality of presentation, spelling and punctuation in key stage 2.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council - Integrated Impact Assessment

This integrated impact assessment (IIA) has been designed to help support the Council in making informed and effective decisions to promote equality and improve outcomes for groups with protected characteristics. PLEASE NOTE: that you no longer need to complete a screening template. All decisions, policy reviews or policy implementation will now require a completed Integrated Impact Assessment.

- Section 1-Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011
- Section 2-Socio-economic Duty – Sections 1 to 3 of the Equality Act 2010
- Section 3-Corporate Plan
- Section 4-Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
- Section 5-Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011
- Section 6-Children’s Right “The Right Way”
- Section 7-Community Safety
- Section 8 Armed Forces
- Section 9-Data
- Section 10-Consultations Statutory Consultation Doctrine of Legitimate Expectation and Gunning Principles
- Section 11-Monitoring
- Section 12-Decision of proposal

Lead Officer	Head of Service	Service Area & Department	Date
Joanne Watts	Lynn Phillips	Education, Education Transformation and Business Change	18.4.23

Briefly outline the proposal indicating what change or decision is to be made, also provide any documentation that may be used to support this.
What is the proposal that needs to be assessed?

There are no associated policy developments and proposal, however, the Council is consulting upon a proposal to increase Capacity of ALN provision in the County Borough for Autistic Spectrum Disorder ASD and ALN Resource Bases across the County Borough

Section 1

Outline how the proposal will impact on any people or groups of people with protected characteristics, please refer to the Equalities Act 2010 (Wales) for further information [Equality Act 2010: guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk) and the EHRC guidance [The Essential Guide to the Public Sector Equality Duty: EHRC](#)

Briefly outline below if there will be any positive or negative impacts as a result of the proposal being considered.

Protected characteristics	Will the proposal have any positive impacts on those with a protected characteristics?	Will the proposal have any negative impacts on those with a protected characteristics?	Outline how the proposal could maximise any positive impacts or minimise any negative impact. Please indicate any views evidence you have that supports this.
Age (<i>people of all ages</i>)	Yes	No	Any pupil from age 3 – 16 will have access to additional spaces in a Autism Spetrum Disorder (ASD)/ Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Resource Base in mainstream education
Disability (<i>people with disabilities/ long term conditions</i>)	Yes	No	The implementation of additional resource bases will ensure improved access to a high-quality, fully accessible teaching and learning environment, in line with 21st Century School standards, whilst also being DDA compliant. The additional facilities will ensure the health and safety of, along with improved wellbeing for a greater number of pupils in need of specialist provision.
Gender Reassignment (<i>anybody who's gender identity or gender expression is different to the sex they were assigned at birth</i>)	No	No	

Marriage or Civil Partnership <i>(people who are married or in a civil partnership)</i>	No	No	
Pregnancy and Maternity <i>(women who are pregnant and/or on maternity leave)</i>	No	No	
Race <i>(people from black, Asian and minority ethnic communities and different racial backgrounds)</i>	No	No	
Religion or Belief <i>(people with different religions and beliefs including people with no beliefs)</i>	Yes	No	This proposal is considering a ALN/ASD RB in a Faith Based School as part of Phase 2
Sex <i>(women and men, girls and boys and those who self-identify their gender)</i>	No	No	
Sexual Orientation <i>(lesbian, gay, bisexual, heterosexual, other)</i>	No	No	

NOTE: Section 2 only needs to be completed if proposals are of a strategic nature or when reviewing previous strategic decisions. See page 6 of the Preparing for the Commencement of the Socio-economic Duty Welsh Government Guidance.

Section 2 Socio-economic Duty (Strategic Decisions Only) <i>The Welsh Governments Socio-economic Duty provides a framework in order to ensure tackling inequality is at the forefront of decision making.</i>			
.Please consider the below vulnerable groups and consider how the proposal could affect them:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Single parents and vulnerable families ➢ People with low literacy/numeracy ➢ Pensioners ➢ Looked after children ➢ Homeless people ➢ Carers ➢ Armed Forces Community ➢ Students ➢ Single adult households ➢ People misusing substances ➢ People who have experienced the asylum system ➢ People of all ages leaving a care setting ➢ People living in the most deprived areas in Wales (WIMD) ➢ People involved in the criminal justice system 			
Socio Economic disadvantage definitions.	Will the proposal have a positive, negative or neutral impacts on the below?	How could you mitigate the negative impacts outlined?	Please highlight any evidence that has been considered.
Low Income / Income Poverty <i>(cannot afford to maintain regular payments such as bills, food, clothing, transport etc.)</i>	Neutral		
Low and/or No Wealth <i>(enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with any unexpected spends and no provisions for the future)</i>	Neutral		




<p>Material Deprivation (<i>unable to access basic goods and services i.e. financial products like life insurance, repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, hobbies etc.</i>)</p>	<p>Neutral</p>		
<p>Area Deprivation (<i>where you live (rural areas), where you work (accessibility of public transport) Impact on the environment?</i>)</p>	<p>Neutral</p>		
<p>Socio-economic Background (<i>social class i.e. parents education, employment and income</i>)</p>	<p>Neutral</p>		
<p>Socio-economic Disadvantage (<i>What cumulative impact will the proposal have on people or groups because of their protected characteristic(s) or vulnerability or because they are already disadvantaged</i>)</p>	<p>Neutral</p>		



Section 3-Corporate Plan

Please outline any Corporate Plan linkages of the proposal -[BG Corporate Plan 22-27](#)

<p>Priority 1 - Maximise learning and skills for all to create a prosperous, thriving, resilient Blaenau Gwent</p>	<p>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</p>
<p>Priority 2 - Respond to the nature and climate crisis and enable connected communities</p>	<p>By placing provisions in much needed areas, it is recognised that it can support and connect communities in school for ALN pupils i.e. much needed revolving door and pupils being part of their school community.</p>
<p>Priority 3 - An ambitious and innovative council delivering quality services at the right time and in the right place</p>	<p>Effective engagement is crucial to ensure the Council runs effectively, the services delivered are appropriate and meet the needs of those that use them</p>
<p>Priority 4 - Empowering and supporting communities to be safe, independent and resilient</p>	<p>Blaenau Gwent Council, together with its fellow local authorities across Gwent, have worked with schools, not only to challenge racism and hate crime, but to also promote inclusion and celebrate the region's diversity</p>

Section 4-Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 – The Five Ways of Working (ICLIP)
Sustainable development principles. The WCFG Act requires the Council to consider how any proposal improves the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales using the five ways of working as a baseline)

Five Ways of Working	How have you used the Sustainable Development Principles in forming the proposal?
<p>Long Tern</p> 	<p>Consider the long-term impact of the proposal on the ability of communities to secure their well-being.</p> <p>The proposal is aimed at creating a long term local solution for Pupils with ALN within the County Borough,</p>
<p>Prevention</p> 	<p>Consider how the proposal is preventing problems from occurring or getting worse</p> <p>The proposal is aimed at providing the right services for the right pupils in the right location preventing escalation of special school placements and keeping pupils in mainstream settings with the support they need.</p>
<p>Integration</p> 	<p>Consider how your proposal will impact on other services provided in our communities (these might be Council services or services delivered by other organisations or groups)</p> <p>It is important for pupils who present with ALN needs are integrated into mainstream setting enabling them to thrive along with the peers.</p>

<p>Collaboration</p> 	<p>Consider how you are working with Council services or services delivered by other organisations or groups in our communities.</p> <p>Education Transformation team and Inclusion Service have worked collaboratively to ensure pupils have the provision they need to thrive.</p>
<p>Involvement</p> 	<p>Consider how you involve people who have an interest in this proposal and ensure that they represent the diversity of our communities.</p> <p>All interested parties will be consultees in this process if approved.</p>

<p>How does your proposal link to the Welsh Governments Priorities for Wales? Please indicate below.</p>	
<p>1. A PROSPEROUS WALES ... an innovative, productive and low carbon society which recognises the limits of the global environment and therefore uses resources efficiently and proportionately (including acting on climate change); and which develops a skilled and well-educated population in an economy which generates wealth and provides employment opportunities, allowing people to take advantage of the wealth generated through securing decent work.</p>	<p>Having localised resource bases for pupils who need this intervention will reduce travel and transport costs and contribute to a low carbon society.</p>
<p>2. A RESILIENT WALES ... a nation which maintains and enhances a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change (for example climate change). Think about how your activity will have regard to protecting and enhancing biodiversity.</p>	

See above
3. A HEALTHIER WALES ... a society in which people’s physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood.
This supports pupils mental well-being by not having to travel potentially out side of the County Borough for their Education.
4. A MORE EQUAL WALES ... A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio economic background and circumstances).
There will be more options for parents to consider based on their child’s schooling. English medium, Faith Based and Welsh-medium.
5. A WALES OF COHESIVE COMMUNITIES ... attractive, viable, safe and well-connected communities.
Enables pupils to feel connected to their communities weather this is mainstream school or local area rather than being education out of county.
6. A WALES OF VIBRANT CULTURE AND THRIVING ... a society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, and sports and recreation.
This proposal will enable Welsh-medium pupils to access ALN provision via the medium of Welsh in a Welsh-medium school and continue to be involved in the mainstream activities such as the Urdd and sports via the medium of Welsh.
7. A GLOBALLY RESPONSIBLE WALES ... a nation which, when doing anything to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, takes account of whether doing such a thing may make a positive contribution to global well-being.
Promoting the opportunities for 1m speakers by 2050.

Section 5-Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and Welsh Language Standards

(The Welsh Language Measure 2011 and the Welsh Language Standards require the Council to have 'due regard' for the positive or negative impact that any proposal may have on opportunities to use the Welsh language. [Welsh Language Standards](#))

Cymraeg

Requirement	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts in regards to the below?	What can be done to mitigate any negative impacts?	Please demonstrate any evidence used to form this opinion.
<p>Compliance with the Welsh Language Standards. <i>Specifically Standards 88 - 93</i></p>	Yes	No	Under Blaenau Gwents Welsh in Education Strategic 10-Year Plan Outcome 6 Additional Learning Needs within the first 5 years of the plan.
<p>What opportunities are there to promote the Welsh Language? <i>e.g. status, use of Welsh language services, use of Welsh in everyday life in work / community</i></p>	Yes	No	Parents will have the opportunity to keep their child who would need ALN provision in Welsh medium education if the proposal proceeds
<p>What opportunities are there for a person or person to use the Welsh Language? <i>e.g. staff, residents and visitors</i></p>	Yes		One of the proposed bases will be located in Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg.
<p>Has the Welsh Language been considered in order to treat the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language?</p>	No	No	Should the Proposal be approved provision will be implemented in both English/Welsh Primary and Secondary locations.

Section 6 – Children’s Rights Approach - [The Right Way](#)

The Children’s Rights Approach – The Right Way is a framework for working with children, grounded in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). It places the UNCRC at the core of planning and service delivery and integrates children’s rights into every aspect of decision-making, policy and practice. The Right Way focuses on three main them Participation, Provision and Protection.

Protected characteristics	Will the proposal have any positive impacts on the Children’s Rights Approach?	Will the proposal have any negative impacts on the Children’s Rights Approach?	Outline how the proposal could maximise any positive impacts or minimise any negative impact. Please indicate any views evidence you have that supports this.
Participation (child or young person as someone who actively contributes to society as a citizen)	Yes	No	Having a localised provision for pupils will enable them to stay in the Blaenau Gwent Borough for their education supporting the Citizenship approach.
Provision (the basic rights of children and young people to survive and develop)	Yes	No	Should this proposal be approved, ALN pupils needs will be met and help them develop.
Protection (children and young people are protected against exploitation, abuse or discrimination)	No	No	

Section 7– Community Safety

Duty to Consider Crime and Disorder Implications

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 places a duty on the local authority to exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder, anti-social and other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment, the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances, re-offending and serious violence.

Impacts	Will the proposal have any positive impacts on crime and disorder?	Will the proposal have any negative impacts on crime and disorder?	Outline how the proposal could maximise any positive impacts or minimise any negative impact. Please indicate any views evidence you have that supports this.
Crime (consider impact on each: victims, offenders and neighbourhoods)	No	No	
Anti-Social Behaviour and behaviour adversely affecting the local environment (consider impact on each: victims, offenders, neighbourhoods and green spaces)	No	No	
Misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances	No	No	

(Think vulnerable children, adults, families and communities)			
Re-offending (Think young people and adults, victims, families, communities)	No	No	
Serious Violence (Think vulnerable young people, vulnerable adults, victims, families, communities)	No	No	
Counter Terrorism (People and places that are vulnerable to terrorism or violent extremism)	No	No	
Community Cohesion (Asylum seekers, Migrants, Victims or Hate Crime, Community tensions)	No	No	

Section 8- Armed Forces Covenant Duty [AFC Draft Statutory Guidance - Final.pdf](#)

Impacts	Will the proposal have any positive impacts on the armed forces community?	Will the proposal have any negative impacts on the armed forces community?	Outline how the proposal could maximise any positive impacts or minimise any negative impact. Please indicate any views evidence you have that supports this.
<p>Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of services • Planning and funding • Co-operation between bodies and professionals <p>These healthcare functions are within scope of the Duty in the following settings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NHS Primary Care services, including general practice, community pharmacies, NHS dental, NHS optometry services and public health screening services. • NHS Secondary Care services, including urgent and emergency care, hospital and community 	No	No	

<p>services, specialist care, mental health services, and additional needs services (as applicable).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local authority-delivered healthcare services, including sexual health services and drug and alcohol misuse services 			
<p>Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Admissions Educational attainment and curriculum Child wellbeing Transport Attendance Additional needs support Use of Service Pupil Premium funding (England only) <p>These education functions are within scope of the Duty in compulsory education settings, that is, primary, secondary, and, for England only, compulsory further education. The Duty does not cover nursery (early years education), higher education, or other</p>	No	No	

voluntary adult education settings			
Housing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocations policy for social housing • Tenancy strategies (England only) • Homelessness • Disabled Facilities Grants 	No	No	

Section 9-Data-Please outline any data or evidence that has been used to develop the proposal, this can be previous consultations, local/national data, pilot projects, reports, feedback from clients etc.		
Data/evidence –What data/evidence was used? - provide any links.	What were the key findings?	How has the data/evidence informed this proposal?
<p>Previous 5 year of numbers on roll for Resource Bases Projections for demand over the next 5 years for Resource Bases</p>	<p>The capacity for Resource Bases across the County Borough are 98% full with only 1 or 2 places in primary and secondary available</p> <p>The cost for sending pupils out of county for their education is high and should this proposal proceed, there will be opportunities for pupils to be educated in provision in county with a cost reduction.</p>	<p>The data provided has enabled the level of demand to be realised for the next 7 years.</p> <p>Cost Savings can be made to the Council by providing this proposal, however, the most important factor is that pupils of Blaenau-Gwent where possible will be education in Blaenau Gwent (a Local Solution) for sustainability of the school estate.</p>

Are there any data or information gaps and if so what are they and how do you intend to address them?

None

Section 10-Consultation. Please provide details of consultation undertaken to support the proposal. Please consider the Gunning Principles: -

Principle 1: Consultation must take place when the proposals are still at a formative stage. You must not have already made up your mind.

Principle 2: Sufficient reasons must be put forward to allow for intelligent consideration and response. Have people been given the information and opportunity to influence?

Principle 3: Adequate time must be given for consideration and response. Is the consultation long enough bearing in mind the circumstances?

Principle 4: The product of consultation must be conscientiously taken into account when finalising the decision

Briefly describe any planned consultations or consultations that have been carried out to date. Please consider the above principles.

Please consider the following questions; -

1. Who did you consult?

Formal consultation will be undertaken with all relevant stakeholders in order to gather their views. The consultee list complies with the Welsh Governments School Organisation Code, November 2022 Version 2

2. When did the consultation take place and was adequate time given for a response?

- The consultation is due to commence if approved by Cabinet Monday 24th April to Tuesday 6th June (this is in compliance with the above School Organisation Code and its (formal 42 consultation period)
- Once concluded an Outturn report will be developed and submitted to Cabinet for approval to proceed to the Statutory Notice Period which will also be in compliance with the School Organisation Code (28 days plus the day it was published)
- Once the Statutory Notice Period has concluded a formal Objections report will be produced and submitted to the Cabinet

- If the proposal to implement is approved by Cabinet a Decision Notification response will be produced and sent around to inform consultees of decision to implement.

3. Was there enough information provided to respond effectively?

A full consultation document was created in line with the School Organisation Code above, stipulation what information needs to be included, the Education Team also have/are in the process of arranging Drop in sessions in the 4 areas of Blaenau Gwent. Abertillery/Brynmawr/Ebbw Vale/Tredegar as well as JCC and Scrutiny. Further meetings and events are planned to capture the views of the Children & Young People.

4. What were the findings?

n/a

5. Have the findings been considered in regards to the decision?

n/a

Section 11-Monitoring and Review

How will the implementation of the proposal be monitored, including the impacts or changes made?

The Inclusion Team will support the schools identified in this proposal to develop their ALN Resource Bases on a phased implementation. The Education Transformation team will support with the transformation change areas of the school(s) to accommodate this proposal. Annual reports to DMT, CLT Scrutiny and Cabinet

What monitoring tools will be used?

Inclusion team have monitoring tools developed to support pupils and an ALN panel is established to place pupils in the right environment for their needs. Such as Resource Bases/Specialist schools.
Data analysis and budget availability/challenges will dictate future policy development.
Education Transformation Team use Prince 2 Methodology to support any project implemented.

How will the results be used for future development?

Annual reports, Planning of School Places in Mainstream education are reviewed annually by the Education Transformation Team Facilities Officer, this in conjunction with the Inclusion team ALN Panel will ensure that the right provision for the right pupil is in place across the County Borough


How and when will it be reviewed?	An ALN review takes place annually by the Inclusion Team and pupils that require additional support will be discussed at ALN Panel.
Who is responsible for ensuring this happens?	Service Manager for Inclusion

Section 12 - Decision

Using the information you have gathered from sections 1-9 please state in the table below whether you are able to proceed with the proposal.

Continue with the proposal in its current form	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> x No <input type="checkbox"/>
Continue with proposal but take into account reasonable steps to mitigate any negative impacts of the proposal	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> ——— No <input type="checkbox"/>

Name of person completing the IIA	
Name:	Sharon Rowlands
Job Title:	Education Transformation Team Sustainable Communities for Learning Officer
Date:	13.4.23

Head of Service Approval			
Name:	Joanne Watts		
Job Title:	Service Manager for Education Transformation and Business Change		
Signature:		Date:	18.4.23

Please contact Policy & Partnerships should you require any further advice or guidance on completing your assessment via lissa.friel@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk or emma.scherptong@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk.

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Agenda Item 7

Cabinet and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer:

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer:

Committee: **People Scrutiny Committee**
Date of meeting: **28th April 2023**
Report Subject: **Blaenau Gwent Response to Estyn Local Government Education Services (LGES) Inspection**
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr. Sue Edmunds, Cabinet Member People and Education**
Report Submitted by: **Luisa Munro-Morris, Head of School Improvement and Inclusion**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
05.04.23	06.04.23	17.04.23			28.04.23	03.05.23		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to present the Education Directorate's response to the Estyn Local Government Education Services (LGES) Inspection, the full report is attached as (Appendix 1).

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The provision of Education is regulated under the Estyn Local Government Education Services (LGES) framework. The Local Authority was inspected between 28th November and 2nd December and the report was published February 2023. The outcome of the Inspection is positive overall, progress since the last inspection has been made and there is no requirement for follow-up activity. The inspectorate identified 3 recommendations for improvement, and the local authority will use these recommendations to update its improvement plans.

- 2.2 The recommendations are:

R1. Improve the corporate leadership of education services,

R2. Improve the quality of self-evaluation, strategic planning and performance management; and,

R3. Accelerate improvements in provision for secondary age pupils in schools causing concern.

- 2.3 In addition to the three recommendations, key areas for improvement have been identified within the body of the Estyn Report. These will be addressed alongside the 3 recommendations.

- 2.4 This report is the first update reporting on progress against the 3 recommendations to Members.

2.5 Local Authority Link Inspection Visits

Estyn have confirmed that there is no requirement for the LA to prepare a Post Inspection Action plan following the inspection. Instead, as part of the termly Local Authority Link Inspection Visits (LALI), the LA will be required to provide evidence to the inspectorate that shows improvements are being made both corporately and operationally in relation to the 3 recommendations.

2.6 The first LALI visit post inspection took place on 16th March 2023. A range of evidence was presented to demonstrate progress towards the 3 recommendations.

2.7 **Business Planning**

The Education Directorate has revised its business plan (improvement plan) to incorporate the 3 recommendations at both a strategic and an operational level. Progress on relevant actions within the business plan will be reviewed on a quarterly basis, in line with other actions.

2.8 **Self-evaluation Report**

Estyn identified in their report that overall, the quality of self-evaluation is not strong enough. In response to this, the Education Directorate have revised the format of the self-evaluation report. The report is now structured so that it reports directly on each of the 5 corporate school improvement priorities. There is a clear focus on progress against the priority, impact and next steps. There is also a section to identify and evidence progress against the 3 recommendations (Appendix 2). Progress has been made on identifying suitable data to use as evidence and this will be reported on in the next update.

2.9 **Action Plans**

Half-termly action planning sessions, which commenced in the Spring term, are in place with key stakeholders from across the LA. The aim of these sessions is to create action plans to address the recommendations and the key areas for improvement from within the report. An initial action plan has been created, which includes measurable success criteria and identifies responsible persons for each action (Appendix 3). The next step is to identify timeframes for each of the actions.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 The report has been considered by Education's DMT and CLT.

3.2 **Option 1**

For members to consider the report and make any amendments for consideration by Cabinet with regards to:

- the action plan in response to Estyn's recommendations;
- the structure of the revised Self-evaluation Report; and
- to accept future monitoring reports against the action plan and Self-evaluation Report.

3.3 **Option 2**

For members to consider the report and accept the information as provided and to receive future monitoring reports against the action plan and self-evaluation report.

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

It is a statutory responsibility of the Corporate Director of Education to assess the effectiveness of the delivery of Education and regular monitoring reports will be produced, in line with the Scrutiny and Cabinet Forward Work Programmes.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

There are no direct financial considerations associated with this report, however, it is pleasing to note the findings from the Inspectorate on resource management. There was acknowledgement that the LA has a track record of spending within its education budget in recent years, with relatively small underspends for the past three years against the overall education budget. The financial outlook, however, for the public sector will be challenging over the period of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and close financial management will be essential to achieve value for money.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

There is one corporate risk for the Education service in the Corporate Risk Register relating to the 2 Schools Causing Concern. Education also maintains a Directorate Risk Register, which is aligned to both service level and corporate risks. One of the Estyn recommendations relates to the slow pace of change in one of these schools causing concern. The risk register is reviewed as part of the business planning process and included within the performance reporting for the service. The inspection findings are to be included in the risk registers.

5.3 ***Legal***

There are no legal requirements as part of this report, however, there is a requirement to respond to the Estyn recommendations within three months of receiving the letter.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

There are no direct implications for staff relating to this report.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

The detailed inspection findings are included within (Appendix 1). The Education Directorate is working together with key stakeholders to deliver 'Better Schools, Better Citizens and Better Communities – all through a child and young person-centred approach'. The Education Directorate are working with corporate colleagues and key partners to ensure that the vision and strategic aims for education are fully understood across the board.

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

The Estyn report was published early in February and the reporting of findings provides the public with the opportunity to view progress of the LA/ Education Directorate and partners to ensure public accountability for our citizens.

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

The LA has shared the inspection findings with stakeholders, including Headteachers and partners. Pupil voice is a key area for the Education Directorate and examples of this are included within the inspection findings, it should also be noted that a member of the Youth Forum contributes to the work the People Scrutiny Committee.

- 6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***
The report enables the Education Directorate to plan as resourcing, risk and performance is continuously reported. The Estyn findings provide a baseline of where the services are currently placed, and most importantly, where we need to be in the future.
- 6.5 ***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 and can also help with planning resources and ensuring value for money services are delivered.
- 6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***
Work will be undertaken across the Education Directorate alongside working with the EAS and schools.
- 6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***
The whole Education Directorate as well as other key service areas, such as Governance and Partnerships, and the Regeneration and Community Services Directorate will be involved in supporting education across the borough.
- 6.8 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***
There are no direct implications in relation to decarbonisation as part of this report, however, school buildings and adaptations consider how to reduce carbon emissions.
- 6.9 ***Integrated Impact Assessment (IAA)***
As this is not a decision-making report an IAA is not required, however, Education work to support all those with protected characteristics.
7. **Monitoring Arrangements**
- 7.1 The performance of the Education Directorate is monitored via 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 – Blaenau Gwent LGES Inspection](#)
- [Appendix 2 – Draft revised SER](#)
- [Appendix 3 – Action plan](#)

A report on education services in

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

**The General Offices
Steelworks Road
Ebbw Vale
Blaenau Gwent
NP23 6DN**

Date of inspection: November 2022

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh.

About Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Blaenau Gwent has a total population of around 67,000 people, and a school population of around 9,400 pupils. There are 25 schools in the local authority, including one that provides Welsh-medium education.

The local authority works in partnership with four other local authorities in South East Wales for some of its education services, including a regional school improvement services (the EAS), a regional ethnic minority support service (GEMS) and a regional support service for learners with sensory and communication needs (SENCOM).

The Council Leader and Executive Member People & Education were both elected to their roles in May 2022. The interim Chief Executive took up post in April 2022, and the Corporate Director for Education took up post in November 2020.

In 2022-2023, the local authority's education budget is around £66,637,000. The delegated school budget per pupil in 2022-2023 is £5,697, slightly higher than the Wales average of £5,032.

The local authority's last inspection was in January 2013. Inspectors take account of a wide range of information about the local population when evaluating outcomes and the quality of education services. They consider this information alongside information about the national population. Some of the most useful information about children and young people in Blaenau Gwent is noted below:

- Over a three-year average, 31.2% of pupils aged 5 to 15 are eligible for free school meals, higher than the Wales average of 23%
- 6.1% of pupils aged 5 to 15 are from ethnic minorities, lower than the Wales average of 13.3%
- 1.8% of pupils aged 5 to 15 have English as an additional language
- 1.1% of pupils aged 5 or over are fluent in Welsh, lower than the Wales average of 15.6%
- 15.5% of pupils aged 5 to 15 have additional learning or special educational needs

Summary

The local authority has made good progress with its education services since it was last inspected around ten years ago as important areas for improvement have largely been addressed. One of the local authority's four priorities in its current corporate plan for 2022-2027 is to 'maximise learning and skills for all learners to create a prosperous, thriving, resilient Blaenau Gwent'. Senior officers and elected members have a strong commitment to education and this is reflected in the funding given to schools and education services.

The local authority generally plans well to make sure that it has suitable education provision to meet the needs of every child and young person. Over the past decade, the local authority has successfully reduced surplus places in schools and improved the conditions of its school buildings. The local authority is suitably developing its Welsh-medium education provision. Whilst there have been some positive developments in provision for pupils with additional learning needs, the quality of planning for future provision is variable.

There are many strengths in the local authority's work to reduce the impact of deprivation on education outcomes and its support for families in low-income households. There are also many strengths in the services to support children and young people's well-being and promote positive relationships.

The authority has worked with its regional school improvement service to strengthen the challenge and support it provides to schools. This work has greater impact for children in non-maintained and primary age settings than for young people in secondary age settings. Provision for young people was too slow to improve in two schools placed in statutory categories.

Despite strengths in education services, corporate leaders have not ensured that their vision and strategic aims for education are fully understood by other officers, elected members, school staff and external partners. Also, corporate leaders have not ensured that the corporate plan is supported by coherent delivery plans for education that include related actions and measurable success criteria. Overall, the quality of self-evaluation, planning for improvement, and performance management is not strong enough.

Recommendations

- R1 Improve the corporate leadership of education services
- R2 Improve the quality of self-evaluation, strategic planning and performance management
- R3 Accelerate improvements in provision for secondary age pupils in schools causing concern

What happens next

Following the publication of the inspection report, the local authority should update its plans to address the recommendations and to take account of shortcomings identified through the inspection process. The local authority should update its plans within three months of the publication of the inspection report.

Main findings

Outcomes

We are unable to provide a full evaluation of outcomes. This is due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused the suspension of inspections of schools and most other education providers between March 2020 and February 2022. It is also due to the lack of data about outcomes that can be compared over time as the pandemic caused changes to the way that qualifications were awarded and affected most other data that we consider when making evaluations, such as school attendance, school exclusions and post-16 learner destinations. Any evaluations that follow provide a context by reporting on outcomes before the pandemic or relate to more recent outcomes where the evidence base is valid and reliable.

Between September 2017 and March 2020, we inspected eight primary schools, one all-age school and one secondary school. Overall, inspection outcomes during this period were in line with the national average. We judged that standards were good in all but one of the primary schools. However, standards in the all-age school and the secondary school were judged to be adequate and unsatisfactory respectively, and both schools were placed in a statutory follow-up category. Although one of these schools has been removed from its category, both of these schools were slow to improve standards following their inspection. Since inspections resumed in February 2022, we have inspected two primary schools and a special school. We asked both primary schools to provide case studies of good practice, but the special school requires special measures.

In the three years before the start of the pandemic, the proportion of pupils who achieved five or more GCSEs at grade C or above including English or Welsh and mathematics varied considerably across the authority's schools. One school performed consistently well, one school performed consistently satisfactorily, one school had a worsening trend and one school performed consistently poorly.

In the school inspections between September 2017 and March 2020, pupils' well-being and attitudes to learning were judged to be good in many schools. For the three years from 2017 to 2019, overall school attendance was consistently lower than the national average. However, the attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals was higher than that of their peers nationally and rates of persistent absenteeism and unauthorised absence were broadly in line with national averages, which are positive given the socio-economic context of the authority. The rate of fixed-term school exclusions of five days or less was well above the national average, although the rate of fixed-term exclusions of more than five days was broadly in line with the national average.

After Year 11, almost all young people progress to further education, employment or training. This is a particular strength given the historically high levels of young people who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) and given the challenging socio-economic context of the authority. Young people continue to benefit from support from dedicated officers beyond their initial destination after Year 11 that helps them to move to an alternative education, employment or training destination if their initial destination does not work out.

Children and young people currently benefit from a wide range of services to support their well-being. Children and young people aged 10 to 25 are well supported by the authority's counselling service in schools and communities which, on average, leads to considerable reductions in emotional distress. Young carers have identity cards that help to reduce barriers that can prevent them from participating fully in and benefiting from activities that their peers enjoy. Vulnerable children and young people benefit from free after school and holiday activities that develop their literacy and numeracy skills and support their personal and social development, physical health and well-being.

When given the opportunity, children and young people in the authority influence decisions that affect them. A young person is elected from the Youth Forum to be a member of the scrutiny committee that considers education matters. The voice of secondary age pupils has supported the development of helpful LGBTQ+ support groups in all their schools.

Education services

How well does the local authority challenge and support non-maintained settings and schools to improve?

Officers in Blaenau Gwent generally know their schools well and have developed a good understanding of the contexts of different schools. Following a review of the education service structure, the local authority created a dedicated senior leadership role for school improvement and inclusion. This has increased the capacity of the local authority to work more closely with schools and to link more effectively with the regional school improvement service, the Educational Achievement Service (EAS).

Officers have strengthened and improved their relationships with senior leaders in most schools. Most headteachers feel that officers listen to their views and take account of their opinions. For example, headteachers identified that pupils' reading skills are weaker following the pandemic and the local authority has commissioned the EAS to support schools to improve these skills.

The local authority and the EAS work well together to support schools. School improvement partners have a well-structured plan of work with school leaders across the academic year, starting with sessions that focus on school self-evaluation and professional discussions with key staff from the school, the local authority and the EAS. These sessions help to identify the level and nature of the support that schools will benefit from to enable them to address their improvement priorities successfully. A single plan for each school outlines the support that the school will receive, details of grant spending, school improvement priorities and termly evaluations of the progress against these. Officers implement a tiered approach to providing support to schools. When schools need additional support, officers implement the Team around the School approach to ensure a holistic approach that meets the bespoke needs of the school.

There are currently no primary schools or non-maintained settings requiring follow-up activity after inspection. Over the past two years officers have identified a few primary schools that require improvement. The local authority and the EAS have provided good support for these schools to help them to improve. This support includes

strengthening the governing body and commissioning curriculum support through the 'local network of schools' process. Where the local authority uses its statutory powers to appoint governors, it takes care to match governors' skills and expertise closely to the needs of the school.

The local authority early years team and the advisory teacher from the EAS provide the three non-maintained settings with effective advice and guidance. This includes support for evaluation and improvement planning as well as guidance on how to create a stimulating environment for young children. This support is helping the settings to deliver good quality provision for their children.

Two schools in the local authority require special measures currently, one secondary school and one special school, and one all-age school was removed from the category of needing significant improvement in February 2022. In two of these three schools, officers did not recognise important shortcomings or the need for school leaders to make significant improvements prior to these being identified by inspectors. The pace of improvement in these two schools has been too slow. Reviews of progress in these schools show that issues identified at the time of the inspections, particularly around the quality of teaching, are not being addressed quickly enough and impact on learners' progress for too long a period of time. Officers do not monitor progress closely enough or ensure that school improvement partners set sufficiently precise and focused success criteria against which progress can be measured. In a few instances where improvement partners lacked the relevant specialist knowledge and skills to be able to support and challenge schools, the local authority challenged the EAS and ensured that suitable improvement partners were put in place.

The EAS and the local authority provide a range of appropriate professional learning opportunities for staff at all levels in schools. These include national leadership programmes and training to support teaching and learning. In addition, the local authority delivers its own useful complementary programmes for aspiring and new headteachers, which helps to mitigate the challenge of recruiting experienced senior leaders to schools in the county. Recent changes to the programme to support governors means that they now access training matched better to their needs.

How well does the local authority tackle inequalities in education experiences and outcomes for children living in poverty?

The local authority has a clear commitment to reducing the impact of poverty on education outcomes. Officers know their communities well and use information they gather locally, national surveys and reports to identify needs and prioritise resources. Heads of service across the local authority have established an anti-poverty council and elected members have recently set up a cost-of-living crisis group. Elected members are committed to addressing this issue, and a new member 'poverty champion' brings knowledge and expertise to help support this aspect of their work. Members look beyond their authority to see what they can learn from others to help improve Blaenau Gwent for its citizens.

Officers collaborate well across directorates on issues relating to poverty to enable resources to be targeted towards those most in need. This is helping vulnerable families to access services where they can get suitable advice, support and practical

help. Officers work well with local charitable groups to provide support for families who are struggling financially, as well as ensuring that period poverty does not lead to educational disadvantage.

The local authority uses a wide range of approaches to help mitigate the effects of poverty in pre-school and children's early years in education. This begins before birth with support for mothers-to-be by, for example, encouraging healthy eating and developing budgeting skills. There are groups for new mothers to help with parenting, for example the 'Lap not App' programme that promotes the development of bonds and relationships. Flying Start hubs are largely within local communities to make them as accessible as possible. Within these hubs, there is holistic support for parents, including opportunities for education and training to access employment.

Officers ensure that schools spend their pupil development grants appropriately, supporting them to make well-considered decisions and challenging them on the impact of their spending. Headteachers value the support the authority provided during the pandemic. School holiday enrichment programmes provide structured childcare for children to have access to sport, craft and environmental activities. Children taking part in these programmes have a daily meal provided for them, learn to cook simple, healthy recipes and have opportunities to prepare meals for their families to dine together.

From September 2022, the local authority increased catering capacity to provide universal free school meals for all pupils up to Year 2, going beyond the Welsh Government's minimum requirements for the roll-out of free school meals at this stage. The authority works with a specialist dietician to ensure that meals are healthy and nutritious, and that they cater appropriately for an increasing number of pupils with special dietary requirements. Additionally, healthy schools co-ordinators work with schools and settings to promote healthy lifestyles, for example by promoting healthy snacks in the early years.

The authority identifies vulnerable children and young people of all ages using a range of suitable risk measures. The needs of the more vulnerable are considered by multi-agency panels. Professionals track, monitor and support vulnerable children and young people through a named support worker. These children and young people have support during important milestones, such as transition from primary to secondary schools and on to post-16 education, training or employment.

Families First funds four social workers to work with schools across clusters. This enables schools to access appropriate support quickly for pupils and families to reduce the risk of disengagement from school and learning. Recently, the authority has restarted its family engagement work following the pandemic, for example supporting pupils returning to school and those with examination anxiety.

The authority acknowledges the work of young carers in the authority and the challenges they can face. Local authority and health professionals proactively identify young carers so that can offer them suitable support. Over the past three years, young carers have been provided with a National Young Carers ID card, which gives access to a range of helpful benefits and incentives to help them and their families, such as free access to leisure facilities and permission to collect prescriptions for

those they care for. Elected members recognise and celebrate the contribution of young carers at an annual awards ceremony.

How well does the local authority support schools to promote respectful relationships and address negative behaviour effectively?

Through the education psychology service and an 'inclusive practice service', all schools have access to a range of suitable support to promote positive, respectful relationships and address negative behaviour effectively. These two services work closely together.

Officers in the education psychology service provide helpful training for school staff, including Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) training for teaching assistants. They provide valuable guidance for additional learning needs co-ordinators (ALNCos) that helps them to consider how to best meet pupils' additional learning needs.

The local authority commissions one of its special schools to provide the 'inclusive practice service' for other schools. This service provides beneficial support for staff to understand behaviours in schools and respond appropriately. It has recently modified its approach from directly supporting individual pupils to providing professional learning to school staff so that they can support pupils themselves.

The local authority has recently developed new 'positive relationships and behaviour' guidance and a 'relationships (anti-bullying)' policy, although there was limited involvement of schools and learners in developing these. The anti-bullying policy sets out the expectation that schools will record all alleged incidents of bullying, outlining the specific types of bullying, including bullying involving pupils with protected characteristics. Previously the local authority had not been collecting information about incidents from schools in a way that would enable it to identify potential issues and act upon them. The local authority has improved its work in this area by purchasing a safeguarding information management system for every school that is being used to record and report incidents and related pupil demographics at school level and collate this information centrally. It is too early to evaluate how well the local authority and its schools are using this system.

The local authority has developed an effective early identification tool, which identifies children and young people aged 7 to 25 years who may be at risk of exclusion or disengaging with education, employment or training, or becoming homeless. Through Families First and a multi-agency approach, the local authority provides helpful early support for these children and young people. Blaenau Gwent's youth service provides strong support for young people aged 11-25 who are at risk of being excluded or being not in education, employment or training (NEET). Working closely with other support services, youth workers support young people on a one-to-one basis and in groups, both in schools and in their communities. This co-ordinated approach has helped young people to remain engaged in their education and has supported a reduction in school exclusions. The proportion of young people who are NEET has reduced considerably over the last decade and young people are supported positively beyond their initial destination after Year 11.

The youth service co-ordinates a counselling service for children and young people from age 10 to age 25 that is provided in schools and community locations. This service provides helpful support for children's and young people's emotional well-being and mental health. A community psychologist provides young people with more specialist support, if necessary, where they are unable to access this through traditional routes. More recently, the local authority has established play therapy for children in Year 2 to Year 6. These services help children and young people to better understand behaviours and manage their relationships with others as well as reducing their emotional distress.

A dedicated detached youth team is used effectively to address anti-social behaviour in local communities. For example, following concerns about the behaviour of some young people in a car park outside of school hours, detached youth workers used their skills to divert young people to more suitable activities. Incidents of anti-social behaviour have reduced wherever this team has worked, and this work supports the work of schools in promoting good relationships.

The authority has very recently established a vulnerable learners panel, which involves senior leaders from secondary and all-age schools. It was established in collaboration with schools to improve the well-being of vulnerable pupils and help decrease exclusions. Early signs suggest that this panel is adding value to the existing range of services.

The range of useful support services to promote positive relationships in schools and communities means that exclusions are low in many schools, although a few schools still have high exclusion rates.

How well does the local authority ensure that the interests of learners are above all others in its planning for schools and other education provision?

Over the past ten years, or so, the local authority has been successful in both reducing surplus places in schools and improving the conditions of its school estate. The local authority has been prepared to make difficult decisions in relation to closing schools and replacing them with mergers and new builds. Where appropriate the local authority has modernised school buildings, for example through refurbishments and extensions.

The local authority has kept its school organisation policy under review and recently amended it to reflect recent developments, including the impact of the pandemic. The policy appropriately considers and incorporates national and local priorities such as its Welsh in Education strategic plan and information and communication technology (ICT) in schools. However, the engagement of headteachers in this strategy was variable and the strategy is generally not well understood. In addition, despite many appropriate actions to improve connectivity and developments in relation to ICT, there is no clear ICT strategy.

The south-east Wales regional sustainable communities for learning group was established by the local authority around five years ago and has recently been extended and includes local authorities from outside the region. The group's work currently focuses on sharing information on processes regarding the planning of

school places, standardising costs, and issues regarding sustainability and carbon neutral designs.

The key focus of the local authority's Welsh in education strategic plan (WESP) is to ensure that Welsh-medium provision is available and accessible in all three of the county's valleys. This is a sensible and pragmatic approach and is supported well by plans to increase access to pre-school and nursery Welsh-medium provision. The Welsh in education forum (WEF) comprises a broad range of partners and provides an effective steer for this work. Officers are aware of the risks in not being able to deliver the WESP's priorities and are considering appropriate steps to mitigate against these risks. The WESP's focus on improving Welsh skills of pupils in English-medium schools and expanding Welsh-medium provision in post-16 is underdeveloped. The local authority is considering working with Merthyr Tydfil and Powys local authorities to scope out the possibility of establishing a Welsh-medium secondary school to cater for the expected rise in demand during the next 10 years.

The local authority has a well-established Welsh-medium primary school in Blaina. An immersion provision is being developed at the school, which will provide additional opportunities for pupils to access Welsh-medium education. There are well-developed plans to open a seedling Welsh-medium primary school in Tredegar in September 2023. This school will also offer childcare provision and a resource base for pupils with autism.

Despite recent closer working between colleagues in education regarding the planning of provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN), data is not always used effectively enough to inform long-term planning. This is illustrated by the recent decision to increase capacity at a special school by nearly 40%. The needs of children with complex special education and medical needs, including those with profound and multiple learning difficulties, are generally known from a very young age, so the demand for additional capacity should have been foreseen and planned for in a more timely way.

The local authority has established useful resource bases in several mainstream schools for pupils with additional learning needs. In some cases, these resource bases helped to address surplus places in the mainstream schools, but as the number of pupils in mainstream classes in these schools has increased, a few schools are now struggling for space. In 2017, the local authority undertook a very useful review of resource base provisions. This identified strengths and areas for improvement across the provisions. However, the ongoing monitoring of these provisions is inconsistent. There are very few references to these provisions in notes of visit from school improvement partners. Where they are referenced, comments made are too limited to be of any value to the local authority and rarely evaluate the impact of provision on pupils' progress.

Senior leaders have a suitable vision for inclusion and pupils with ALN. However, this is not yet supported by a clear strategy. A range of very useful policy and guidance materials have recently been shared with schools.

The local authority makes provision for pupils in out-of-county settings. Half of the pupils currently placed in out-of-county provision have additional learning needs related to their social, emotional and behavioural needs. The local authority does not

analyse its use of out-of-county settings well enough in order to understand the implications for its capacity to meet the needs of pupils locally.

Leadership and management

Leaders in Blaenau Gwent place a high priority on improving outcomes for children and young people across the local authority. The local authority has high aspirations for regeneration and education to enable all children and young people in the local area to thrive and succeed. Lead elected members and senior officers are committed to improving conditions for their community so that deprivation is not a barrier to long term success. Elected members and officers demonstrate a strong commitment to 'maximise learning and skills for all learners to create a prosperous, thriving, resilient Blaenau Gwent', one of the four priorities set out in the corporate plan 2022-2027. Corporate leaders and the education directorate are beginning to refine their approaches to ensure that this commitment is translated into specific and measurable actions.

Senior leaders in the education directorate have worked with elected members and other senior officers across the council to establish a suitable vision for education. This aims to create a 'school-led, self-improving system that develops 'better schools, better citizens and better communities'. However, this vision is not communicated clearly or consistently enough by the corporate leadership team. As a result, the strategic direction for education is not sufficiently understood by all elected members, officers, or staff in schools.

Corporate leaders have not ensured that the corporate priority and directorate vision for education are coherently reflected in education plans. The corporate plan sets out how the local authority will know how well it is doing in relation to its priority for education, but the range of broad indicators in the corporate plan are not developed sufficiently into specific success criteria against relevant actions in education plans. This disconnect between corporate and education plans tempers senior leaders' ability to hold officers to account for their work and ensure an appropriate pace of improvement in identified areas. Nevertheless, the executive board, which includes senior elected members and senior officers from across the local authority, is used appropriately to hold education officers to account for progress against planned actions. In the board meetings, members challenge officers suitably.

Despite the weakness in corporate leadership, the education senior management team has developed strong working relationships with officers across the directorate and places a high level of trust in staff at all levels to deliver high quality services. Senior education managers have good oversight of most education services covered by our local inspection questions. These services have strengthened over time to better meet the needs of children and young people, and are having a positive impact on their outcomes.

The education senior management team meetings provide suitable opportunities for education leaders to monitor progress against planned activity. However, the quality of improvement planning and evaluation within the education directorate is too variable. Plans do not always include suitable success criteria, and evaluations therefore focus too often on whether actions have been completed rather than the impact they have had on improving provision and outcomes for learners. In

mitigation, senior managers have a better understanding of strengths and weaknesses in their services areas than is reflected in planning and self-evaluation documentation.

Performance management processes in the local authority are suitably established and used to support officers and hold them to account. Officers have access to monthly support sessions and regularly review progress against targets set. Despite this, performance management targets are not consistently precise enough and do not always identify the specific aspects of practice that officers need to improve. As a result, performance management processes are not aligned consistently with evaluation and improvement work, and accountability does not always focus on the most important aspects of officers' work.

There are suitable examples of officers accessing useful professional learning to improve aspects of their work, such as managing staff and supporting their well-being. However, the local authority does not have a strategic enough approach to planning or evaluating the impact of professional learning across the directorate.

The local authority has strengthened working relationships with its regional school improvement service (EAS). As a result, officers in inclusion services are working more closely with school improvement partners to provide a holistic approach to supporting schools. The local authority has recently improved the way it holds EAS to account for operational aspects of their work, for example when considering the usefulness of notes from school visits by school improvement partners.

Leaders make appropriate decisions when they are concerned about the progress of schools. For example, the authority has issued warning notices to a few schools that were causing concern and used its powers to appoint additional governors. In a few cases, the progress that schools causing concern make is too slow and the local authority is not sufficiently challenging school leaders, the work of EAS or holding its own officers to account for the impact of actions in these schools.

Elected members, through scrutiny, carry out their duties diligently. They regularly challenge and scrutinise decisions and officers respond promptly to their requests. They have a good working knowledge of the local authority and the members briefings have provided them with suitable professional learning, which has improved the way in which they hold the local authority to account for its work. However, due to the weaknesses in evaluation across the directorate, members are not always provided with a clear enough picture of the strengths and areas for improvement across the directorate. This limits their ability to hold the local authority and the EAS to account for all aspects of their work.

Officers and elected members are committed to safeguarding young people in their local authority. There is an appropriate safeguarding culture within the local authority. All officers and elected members receive suitable safeguarding training. The way in which education and children's services work together has contributed well to improving multi-agency working and the support schools receive to manage the needs of pupils and their families more effectively. The advice and guidance provided to schools by officers is valued by school leaders and helps them to respond to safeguarding concerns appropriately. Elected members are beginning to develop

their understanding of safeguarding in education and challenge appropriately the content of reports they receive.

The authority's prioritisation of education is reflected in its allocation funding for education further above its Indicator Based Assessment than most local authorities in Wales. It also increased funding to schools this year by a higher percentage than the Welsh average. The authority also budgeted for the highest spend per pupil of all authorities in Wales this year. The authority delegates a higher percentage of its education budget to schools than many other Welsh local authorities. To support the improvement of school buildings, the authority has also allocated nearly £7million of its capital funding over 2019-2025 for Band B of its 21st Century Schools programme.

The authority has a track record of spending within its education budget in recent years, with relatively small underspends for the past three years against the overall education budget. The authority is projecting a small overspend this year and understands its key current and future budget pressures for education that include energy costs and home-to-school transport.

Overall, schools' balances increased in the three years prior to the pandemic. None of the authority's schools were in deficit at the end of last year. In common with other local authorities, total schools' balances have increased significantly during the pandemic due to additional grant funding but the authority anticipates that schools' balances will reduce by the end of this year, and in future years. The authority has applied its scheme for schools' financing where schools were in deficit prior to the pandemic. In previous years, deficit reduction plans were in place for a very few schools, although some actions were appropriately not taken during the pandemic.

The authority provides a comprehensive range of service level agreements (SLAs) for a range of services it provides for schools, such as catering and cleaning. Feedback from headteachers on some SLAs was mixed when the authority surveyed schools as part of a review of SLAs last year. SLAs were revised to take account of feedback and there is subsequently a high level of take-up for 2022-2025.

The School Budget Forum is generally well attended by headteachers and engaged in helpful activity such as reviewing the schools' funding formula and SLAs. The authority makes use of comparative data to inform reviews of its school funding formula, for example the re-allocation of some funding from primary to secondary schools. The funding formula was reviewed for each of the last two years.

Many headteachers agree that the authority provides good support for schools with their financial planning and nearly all agree that the authority provides schools with good human resources support.

The authority monitors appropriately the delivery of commissioned services, and key commissioned services, including the EAS and Aneurin Leisure Trust, have been discussed at scrutiny committee.

Evidence base of the report

Before the inspection, inspectors:

- consult the local authority on the local inspection questions to be used during the inspection, based on the authority's self-evaluation, strategic plans and relevant data held by Estyn
- analyse the outcomes from open questionnaires, including the views of learners, parents, school staff and governors, local authority staff, regional consortium staff, elected members and general public
- carry out a preliminary visit to the local authority to meet with a range of relevant partners to education services, such as learner representatives, headteachers and governors, and leaders from statutory and third sector agencies working with children and young people

During the inspection, inspectors normally:

- meet with the leader of the council, elected members responsible for education services, elected members responsible for the scrutiny of education services, the chief executive, the director of education, other leaders and managers in education services, other relevant staff in the local authority, the managing director of the regional consortium for school improvement and other relevant staff from the regional consortium
- look closely at the local authority's self-evaluation processes
- consider the local authority's strategic and operational plans for improvement
- scrutinise a variety of documents, including information on learner outcomes, information on the performance of schools and other education settings, including information from the regional consortium for school improvement, minutes from a range of meetings, reports presented to council or scrutiny, information relating to the safeguarding of learners and any other information relevant to the local authority's education services held by Estyn

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection
- provide a draft copy of the report for the local authority to note any concerns with factual accuracy, and made amendments where necessary

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the local authority and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

The report was produced in accordance with Section 38 of the Education Act 1997, the Children Act 2004 and the Learning and Skills Act 2000.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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Publication date: 10/02/2023



Cyngor Bwrdeisdref Sirol
Blaenau Gwent
County Borough Council

Education Directorate Self-Evaluation Report

End of year review	October 2023
Mid-term review	April 2024

Contents:

Context

Blaenau Gwent School and Local Authority – Context

Executive Summary

Estyn Recommendations February 2023

	Progress	Impact	Next Steps
Recommendation 1 - Improve the corporate leadership of education services			
Recommendation 2 - Improve the quality of self-evaluation, strategic planning and performance management			
Recommendation 3 - Accelerate improvements in provision for secondary age pupils in schools causing concern			

Priority 1: Improving educational standards and wellbeing for pupils, particularly at KS4

Why this is a priority within the education business plan

Overview of progress

Impact

Next steps - new actions included in business plan

Priority 2: Securing quality ALN/Inclusion provision, particularly to support vulnerable groups of learners and those who are eFSM

Why this is a priority within the education business plan

Overview of progress

Impact

Next steps - new actions included in business plan

Priority 3: Transforming education in line with responsive school support services and a school estate that is fit for the 21st Century

Why this is a priority within the education business plan

Overview of progress

Impact

Next steps - new actions included in business plan

Priority 4: Delivering effective young people and partnership provision, with a focus on lifelong learning and leisure/recreation provision to meet community need

Why this is a priority within the education business plan

Overview of progress

Impact

Next steps - new actions included in business plan

Priority 5: Enhancing the performance culture for Education and Leisure that delivers better educational outcomes and improved value for money

Why this is a priority within the education business plan

Overview of progress

Impact

Next steps - new actions included in business plan



Recommendations following the Estyn Inspection November 2022

R1 Improve the corporate leadership of education services			
Estyn Comments	Theme	Actions	Success Criteria
1.1 Whilst there have been some positive developments in provision for pupils with additional learning needs, the quality of planning for future provision is variable.	Inclusion and ALN	LMM - Visioning sessions LMM - Inclusion working group set up LMM/JS/LJ - and Vision revisited LMM/JS/LJ -Inclusion strategy created, based on the vision LMM/JS/JW - Planning for additional resource bases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear vision for inclusion which drives all planning • Key stakeholders drive inclusion planning • Inclusion strategy in place – short/mid- and long-term goals • Additional resource bases ensure no capacity issues in resource bases
1.2 Despite strengths in education services, corporate leaders have not ensured that their vision and strategic aims for education are fully understood by other officers, elected members, school staff and external partners.	Education vision	DMT/key LA officers - Revisit vision DMT/key LA officers - Visioning sessions DMT - Ensure vision underpins self-evaluation and improvement planning DMT - Increase visibility of vision e.g. email signatures, letter heads DMT - Ensure vision is shared with and understood by all key stakeholders e.g. Joint HT meetings, members briefing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear vision for education underpinned but clear purposes • Vision understood by all key stakeholders • Vision drives all improvement planning
1.3 Despite recent closer working between colleagues in education regarding the planning of provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN), data is not always used effectively enough to inform long-term planning. This is illustrated by the recent decision to increase capacity at a special school by nearly 40%.	ALN	LMM/JW/JS - Closer working between Inclusion and Transformation LMM/JS/JSi/CS - Closer working with Youth service, early years, ALN officer for EY, Health and Service Manager for Inclusion to inform future planning to inform decision making JS – Training on ALN Act for Health LMM/JS/LJ - Strategy for Inclusion developed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement planning for inclusion is based on sharing of key data across service areas and wider stakeholders • Health colleagues have a clearer understanding of ALN Act to support their work with schools

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy for inclusion in place
1.4 Senior leaders have a suitable vision for inclusion and pupils with ALN. However, this is not yet supported by a clear strategy.	Inclusion and ALN	See 1.3	See 1.3
1.5 However, this vision is not communicated clearly or consistently enough by the corporate leadership team. As a result, the strategic direction for education is not sufficiently understood by all elected members, officers, or staff in schools.	Education vision	See 1.2	See 1.2

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R2 Improve the quality of self-evaluation, strategic planning and performance management			
Estyn Comments	Theme	Actions	Success Criteria
2.1 The corporate plan is not supported by coherent delivery plans for education that include related actions and measurable success criteria.	Business Planning	DMT - Revisit Business Plans, ensure actions relate to the vision, have clear timelines and measurable success criteria	The corporate plan is supported by Coherent business plans for education that include clear timelines, related actions and measurable success criteria
2.2 Overall, the quality of self-evaluation, planning for improvement, and performance management is not strong enough.	Self-Evaluation Business Planning	DMT - Self-evaluation joint working group half-termly DMT - Performance management – clear focus on accountability to Business Plan, and professional development opportunities JS – Training for Inclusion team on Fades	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of self-evaluation is improved and uses relevant data effectively to enable informed improvement planning • Performance management is based on a performance coaching model, strong focus on accountability to business plan priorities and relevant professional development opportunities
2.3 The corporate priority and directorate vision for education are not coherently reflected in education plans.	Business Planning	See 2.1	See 2.1
2.4 The range of broad indicators in the corporate plan are not developed sufficiently into specific success criteria against relevant actions in education plans.	Performance Indicators	See 2.1	See 2.1
2.5 Disconnect between corporate and education plans tempers senior leaders' ability to hold officers to account for their work and	Business Planning	See 2.1 and 2.2	See 2.1 and 2.2

ensure an appropriate pace of improvement in identified areas.			
2.6 Plans do not always include suitable success criteria, and evaluations therefore focus too often on whether actions have been completed rather than the impact they have had on improving provision and outcomes for learners.	Self-Evaluation Reporting Impact	See 2.1	See 2.1
2.7 Senior managers have a better understanding of strengths and weaknesses in their services areas than is reflected in planning and self-evaluation documentation.	Business planning Self-Evaluation	See 2.1	See 2.1
2.8 Performance management targets are not consistently precise enough and do not always identify the specific aspects of practice that officers need to improve. As a result, performance management processes are not aligned consistently with evaluation and improvement work, and accountability does not always focus on the most important aspects of officers' work.	Performance Indicators Targets	See 2.2	See 2.2
2.9 Due to the weaknesses in evaluation across the directorate, members are not always provided with a clear enough picture of the strengths and areas for improvement across the directorate. This limits their ability to hold the local authority and the EAS to account for all aspects of their work.	Self-Evaluation	LP - Ensure developments in self-evaluation and business plans are clearly delivered to members through relevant reports/member briefings. LMM/MJ – Develop clearer processes for holding EAS to account for all aspects of their work. Information from these processes to be shared with members.	Members are provided with clear information on strengths and areas for improvement across the directorate. Members use the information to challenge and hold the education directorate and the EAS to account.

R3 Accelerate improvements in provision for secondary age pupils in schools causing concern			
Estyn Comments	Theme	Actions	Success Criteria
3.1 This work has greater impact for children in non-maintained and primary age settings than for young people in secondary age settings. Provision for young people was too slow to improve in two schools placed in statutory categories.	Schools Causing Concern – pace of change	LP - Re-issue of SWN to BFS, clear targets with measurable outcomes and time specific i.e. 2 terms	BFS are removed from a category
3.2 However, standards in the all-age school and the secondary school were judged to be adequate and unsatisfactory respectively, and both schools were placed in a statutory follow-up category. Although one of these schools has been removed from its category, both of these schools were slow to improve standards following their inspection.	Schools Causing Concern – pace of change	See 3.1	See 3.1
3.3 Two schools in the local authority require special measures currently, one secondary school and one special school, and one all-age school was removed from the category of needing significant improvement in February 2022. In two of these three schools, officers did not recognise important shortcomings or the need for school leaders to make significant improvements prior to these being identified by inspectors. The pace of improvement in these two schools has been too slow.	Schools Causing Concern – early identification	LP/LMM/MJ - Early identification through Professional Discussions, CSSR, Supported Self-evaluation, Wider group meetings, Partnership meetings, weekly directorate meetings with EAS Implementation of Team Around the School approach when issues identified	Important shortcomings in SCC schools are recognised early and appropriate support and challenge is put in place quickly. Clear monitoring systems of progress are put in place.

<p>3.4 Progress in these schools show that issues identified at the time of the inspections, particularly around the quality of teaching, are not being addressed quickly enough and impact on learners' progress for too long a period of time.</p>	<p>Schools Causing Concern – early identification</p>	<p>See 3.3</p>	<p>See 3.3</p>
<p>3.5 Officers do not monitor progress closely enough or ensure that school improvement partners set sufficiently precise and focused success criteria against which progress can be measured.</p>	<p>Schools Causing Concern – early identification</p>	<p>LMM/MJ – Develop clearer processes for holding EAS to account for all aspects of their work. LMM/MJ – Work with EAS to review and remodel SIP working</p>	<p>Important shortcomings in schools are recognised early and appropriate support and challenge is put in place quickly. Clear monitoring systems of progress are put in place.</p>
<p>3.6 In a few cases, the progress that schools causing concern make is too slow and the local authority is not sufficiently challenging school leaders, the work of EAS or holding its own officers to account for the impact of actions in these schools.</p>	<p>Schools Causing Concern – pace of change</p>	<p>LP/LMM – Overview of Performance Management of HTs LMM/MJ – Develop clearer processes for holding EAS to account for all aspects of their work. DMT - Performance management of LA officers</p>	<p>Pace of change in all schools is timely.</p>

Other			
Estyn Comments	Theme	Actions	Success Criteria
For the three years from 2017 to 2019, overall school attendance was consistently lower than the national average.	Attendance	DMT - Scrutiny of attendance data at DMT – identification of key themes, areas of good practice DMT - Performance management of relevant officers LA - Reinstate fines and CALICO, consistent approach JS/LA - Joint working with SEWC – sharing of good practice, implement strategies in schools JSi/LA - Joint termly meetings with secondary schools to discuss strategies to improve attendance etc.	School attendance is in line with or above national average. BG is in the second quartile or higher for attendance.
The rate of fixed-term school exclusions of five days or less was well above the national average, although the rate of fixed-term exclusions of more than five days was broadly in line with the national average.	Exclusions	DMT - Scrutiny of exclusions data at DMT – identification of key themes, areas of good practice LMM/JS – Introduction of additional nurture provision in schools with high levels of exclusions DMT - Performance management of relevant officers LA - Joint working with SEWC – sharing of good practice, implement strategies in schools JS – Vulnerable learner Panel to support reduction of pupils at risk of permanent exclusion. Review of managed move protocol. JSi/LA - Joint termly meetings with secondary schools to discuss strategies to improve attendance etc.	The rate of fixed term exclusions is line with or better than the national average. Fixed term exclusions continue to improve in line with the national average or better.
When given the opportunity, children and young people in the authority influence decisions that affect them.	Pupil voice	LMM/LF/ES - Continue to develop the work of Pupil Voice forums which impact on decision making e.g. Youth Forum. Ensure feedback from Pupil Voice Forums informs self-evaluation and improvement planning	Children and young people are provided with increased opportunities to influence decisions that affect them.
The local authority has recently developed new 'positive relationships and behaviour' guidance and a 'relationships (anti-bullying)' policy, although there was limited involvement of schools and learners in developing these.	Inclusion	LMM/JS/MJ - Inclusion Working Group to review all Inclusion Policies Inclusion Policies to be reshared with schools/governing bodies	Key stakeholders shape revised inclusion policies.

<p>The local authority has improved its work in this area by purchasing a safeguarding information management system for every school that is being used to record and report incidents and related pupil demographics at school level and collate this information centrally. It is too early to evaluate how well the local authority and its schools are using this system.</p>	<p>Safeguarding</p>	<p>MJ - DMT progress report. Monthly officer meeting to progress My Concern matters. My Concern School / officer working group established. Project plan revised for next stages of implementation</p>	<p>My Concern is used by all schools to effectively record and report incidents, including safeguarding, bullying and RPIs. The LA uses My Concern reports to effectively monitor data, and to inform improvement planning.</p>
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<p>The range of useful support services to promote positive relationships in schools and communities means that exclusions are low in many schools, although a few schools still have high exclusion rates.</p>	<p>Safeguarding</p>	<p>JS - Evaluate the impact of additional funding for schools with high exclusion rates to provide additional Nurture provision MJ/SD - Safeguarding Performance report to comment upon the impact that additional funding has upon school exclusion rates</p>	<p>The rate of fixed term exclusions is line with or better than the national average. Fixed term exclusions continue to improve in line with the national average or better.</p>
<p>Information and communication technology (ICT) in schools. However, the engagement of headteachers in this strategy was variable and the strategy is generally not well understood. In addition, despite many appropriate actions to improve connectivity and developments in relation to ICT, there is no clear ICT strategy.</p>	<p>ICT</p>	<p>JW - Bring together range of ICT initiatives into one clear strategy Ensure HT representation in relevant ICT meetings Feedback to HTs in Joint Headteacher meeting on ICT strategy MJ - The implementation of My Concern</p>	<p>Clear ICT strategy in place which is co-constructed with key stakeholders, including headteachers. ICT strategy is understood by all key stakeholders.</p>
<p>The local authority has established useful resource bases in several mainstream schools for pupils with additional learning needs. In some cases, these resource bases helped to address surplus places in the mainstream schools, but as the number of pupils in mainstream classes in these schools has increased, a few schools are now struggling for space.</p>	<p>Transformation</p>	<p>LMM./JW/JS - Review of resource bases JW - Review of school capacity</p>	<p>The LA has appropriate Resource Bases in place that meet the needs of BG learners, including in Welsh medium. School capacity issues are resolved.</p>
<p>However, the ongoing monitoring of these Resource Base provisions is inconsistent. There are very few references to these provisions in notes of visit from school improvement partners. Where they are referenced, comments made are too limited to be of any value to the local authority and rarely evaluate the impact of provision on pupils' progress.</p>	<p>Inclusion and school improvement</p>	<p>JS/MJ - EAS to undertake review of Resource Base provision through SIP work Autumn 2022. Supported Self-evaluation activities undertaken by the EAS in schools with resource bases to be undertaken by Inclusion LA officer and SIP JS – review entry and exit criteria for Resource Bases</p>	<p>Review of resource bases completed and used to effectively inform improvement planning. Revised entrance and exit criteria for Resource Bases in school.</p>

<p>The local authority does not analyse its use of out-of-county settings well enough to understand the implications for its capacity to meet the needs of pupils locally.</p>	<p>Inclusion and ALN</p>	<p>JS - Analysis of out of county settings undertaken, spreadsheet created where all relevant data can be analysed.</p>	<p>Analysis of out of county placements enables clear planning for placements, and reduces potential risks linked to finance.</p>
<p>However, the local authority does not have a strategic enough approach to planning or evaluating the impact of professional learning across the directorate.</p>	<p>Professional Learning</p>	<p>DMT - Professional Learning a core part of Professional Coaching meetings. Professional Learning opportunities link to Business planning and or LA officer's portfolio</p>	<p>The LA plans and evaluates the impact of professional learning across the directorate effectively.</p>

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Agenda Item 8

Cabinet and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A

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

Committee: **People Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **28th April 2023**

Report Subject: **Corporate Director of Education Services Annual Performance Report 2022/23**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Sue Edmunds, Cabinet Member People and 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	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
13/3/23	16/3/23	17.04.23			28.04.23	03.05.23		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to present the Corporate Director of Education's Annual Performance Report covering the 2022/23 period and 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.

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 consider the information detailed within the Corporate Director of Education's Report and contribute to the continuous assessment of effectiveness by making appropriate recommendations to Cabinet.

3.3 Option 2

To consider and accept the report as presented.

4. Evidence of how 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 this annual report has been produced, in line with the Scrutiny and Cabinet Forward Work Programmes.

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 2022 to March 2023.

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 In a previous People Scrutiny Committee meeting, Members requested that the performance report and associated data was shared in a more user-friendly manner. Consequently, the Education Directorate has worked with the Corporate Performance team to produce a revised report format with a greater emphasis on infographics to highlight performance across the board. This approach is still under-development and Members views would be welcomed to inform the next iteration of the report. The attached performance report covers the following aspects of performance:

- Foreword
- The Shape of Our Place
- Director's Overview & Reflections on 2022/23
- Local, Political Leadership, Governance & Accountability
- Inspection of Blaenau Gwent Local Government Education Services
- The Education Improvement Plan updates against the 5 priorities
- Effective Service Delivery
- How People are Shaping our Services
- Our Future Direction

6.3 The Education Directorate's 5 priorities outlined in the Education Improvement Plan (EIP) are outlined overleaf. Progress against these priorities is included within appendix 1, as well as an overview on key areas of progress and areas where further improvement is required:

- **Improving educational standards and wellbeing** for pupils, particularly at KS4;
- **Securing quality ALN/Inclusion provision**, particularly to support Vulnerable groups of learners and those who are eFSM;
- **Transforming education** in line with responsive school support services and a school estate that is fit for the 21st Century;

- **Delivering effective young people and partnership provision**, with a focus on lifelong learning and leisure/recreation provision to meet community need; and,
- **Enhancing the performance culture for Education and Leisure** that delivers **better educational outcomes and improved value for money**.

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)

Pupil voice is a key area for the Education Directorate and examples of this are included within (Appendix 1).

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 which 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

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Education & Leisure Services

Annual Performance Report



April 2022-March 2023

'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'

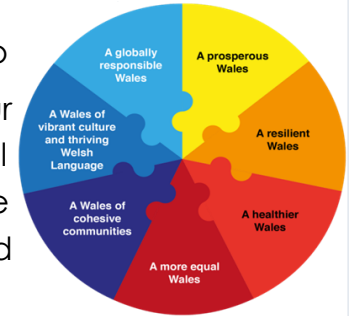
Contents



Foreword	3
The Shape of Our Place	4
Director's Overview & Reflections on 2022/23	7
Local, Political Leadership, Governance & Accountability	10
Inspection of Blaenau Gwent Local Government Education Service	11
Improving educational standards and wellbeing for pupils, particularly at KS4	14
Securing quality ALN/Inclusion provision, particularly to support Vulnerable groups of learners and those who are eFSM	18
Transforming education in line with responsive school support services and a school estate that is fit for the 21st Century	25
Delivering effective young people and partnership provision, with a focus on lifelong learning and leisure/recreation provision to meet community need	30
Enhancing the performance culture for Education and Leisure that delivers better educational outcomes and improved value for money	34
Case Studies	37
Member Engagement	43
People, Partnerships and Engagement	44
Our Future Direction	45

Foreword

Why this is important - Improving the quality and provision of teaching and learning is vitally important to ensure we are achieving ambitious outcomes for all children and young people. We will continue to invest in our education services and present service activity which highlights how we are contributing to the Council's overall aim of delivering all seven national well-being goals. These goals are set out within The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 which is legislation aiming to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The vision of this legislation is expressed in the seven National well-being goals.



The Act also puts a duty on public bodies to apply the **sustainable development principles** which states they 'must meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. The sustainable development principle is made up of the following five ways of working, pictured below:



Integration



Collaboration



Involvement



Long Term



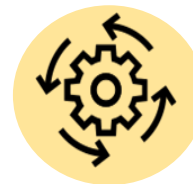
Prevention

Throughout this report some areas of performance that meet these ways of working are demonstrated by the above images.

The Purpose of this report - To present service activity for the period, detailing achievements and challenges aligned to the priority areas identified in the Corporate Plan 2022/27, which are to :



Maximise learning and skills for all to create a prosperous, thriving, resilient Blaenau Gwent



An ambitious and innovative council delivering quality services at the right time and in the right place



Respond to the nature and climate crisis and enable connected communities

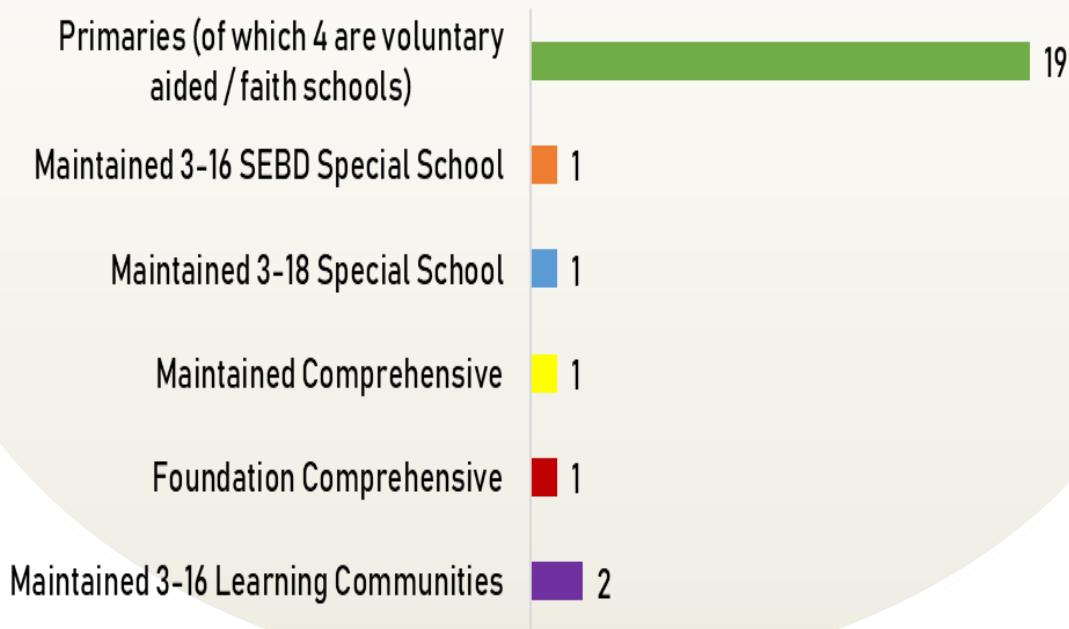


Empowering and supporting communities to be safe, independent and resilient

The Shape of Our Place -

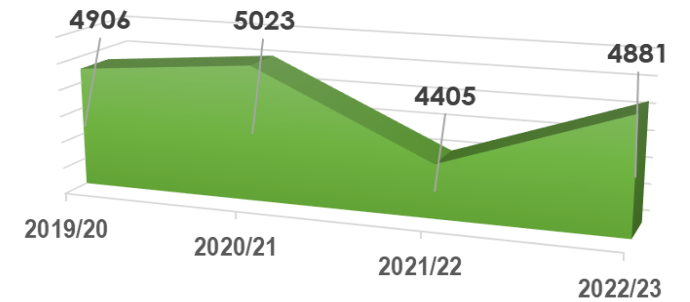
Blaenau Gwent is a place of heritage and dramatic change, with a sense of its past but its eyes firmly on the future. The area is relatively small geographically, being at most 15 miles north to south, and 8 miles east to west. Blaenau Gwent is defined physically by high hillsides dividing the three main valleys. These valleys are home to towns and villages which are largely post-heavy industrial in nature. However, each community proudly maintains its own character and traditions. Although the towns give the county borough a busy, urban feel, it is a largely rural area. Wherever you are, beautiful countryside is never far away.

Blaenau Gwent has 25 schools across 31 school sites and There are currently circa 9,000+ pupils on roll across all Blaenau Gwent schools.

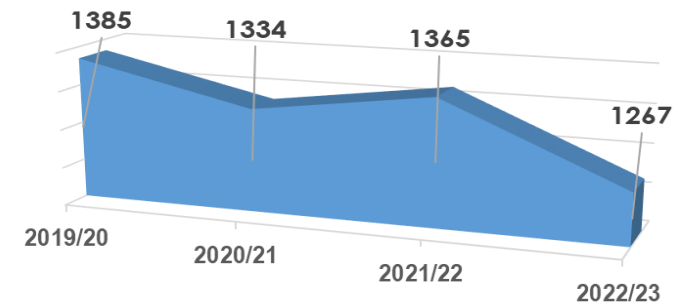


Number of pupils on roll in each categorisation of school. Note: 2022/23 figures are as at 27th January 2023

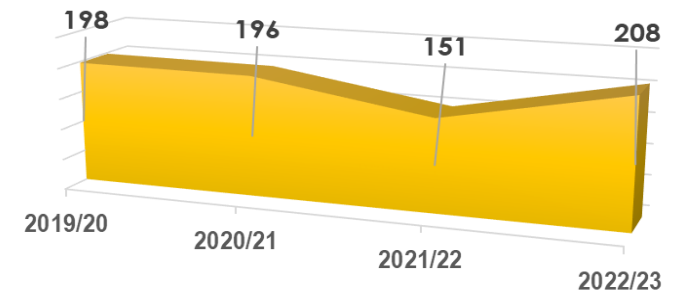
Number of Pupils on roll in Primary Schools



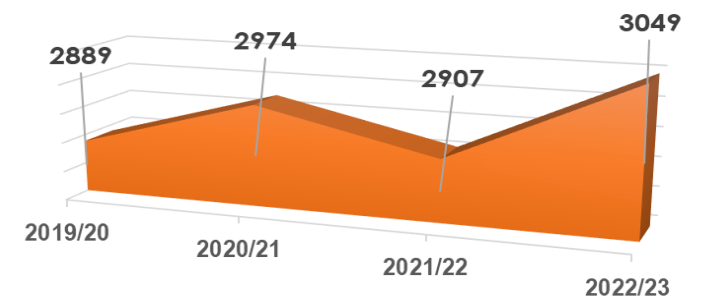
Number of Pupils on roll in Secondary



Number of Pupils on roll in Special Schools



Number of Pupils on roll in Middle School



The Shape of Our Place (continued)-

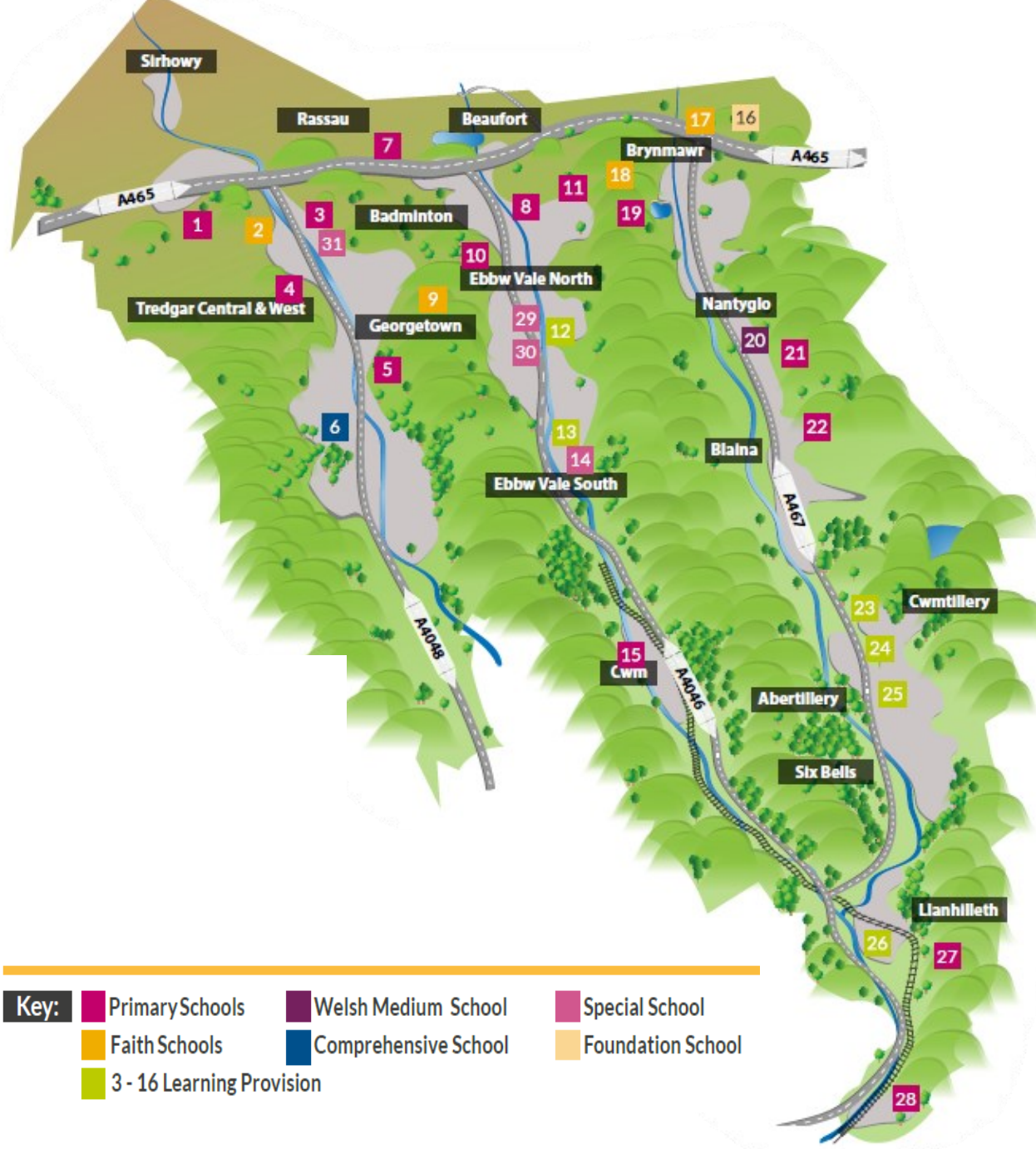
The Education Directorate provides services to support children and young people's educational learning opportunities whilst working collaboratively with our schools and the Aneurin Leisure and Awen Trust in a Council client function role. The Education Directorate has developed a new purpose statement, which is to deliver '**Better Schools, Better Citizens and Better Communities**'. The Education Workforce Plan 2021-26 contributes to the purpose by prioritising key strategic and operational activity to support our workforce at all levels.

The plan covers the Directorate's three main aspects of core service delivery, namely:

- School Improvement and Inclusion;
- Education Transformation and Business Change; and,
- Young People and Partnerships.

And includes a workforce Profile for the Directorate.

Location of Schools



Key:	1 Primary Schools	2 Welsh Medium School	3 Special School
	4 Faith Schools	5 Comprehensive School	6 Foundation School
	7 3-16 Learning Provision		

- 1 Brynbach Primary School
- 2 St Joseph's RC School
- 3 Glanhowy Primary School
- 4 Deighton Primary School
- 5 Georgetown Primary School
- 6 Tredegar Comprehensive School
- 7 Rhos y Fedwen Primary School
- 8 Glyncoed Primary School
- 9 All Saint's RC School
- 10 Willowtown Primary School
- 11 Beaufort Hill Primary School
- 12 Ebbw Fawr Learning Community Secondary Phase
- 13 Ebbw Fawr Learning Community Primary Phase
- 14 Pen Y Cwm Special School
- 15 Cwm Primary School
- 16 Brynmawr Foundation School
- 17 St Mary's Church in Wales School
- 18 St Mary's Roman Catholic School
- 19 Blaenycwm Primary School
- 20 Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg
- 21 Coed y Garn Primary School
- 22 Ystruth Primary School
- 23 Abertillery Learning Community - Roseheyworth Road Campus
- 24 Abertillery Learning Community - Secondary Campus
- 25 Abertillery Learning Community - Tillery Street Campus
- 26 Abertillery Learning Community - Six Bells Campus
- 27 St Illtyds Primary School
- 28 Sofrydd Primary School
- 29 River Centre 3-16 Learning Community - Secondary Campus
- 30 River Centre 3-16 Learning Community - Primary Campus
- 31 River Centre 3-16 Learning Community - House



Director's overview and reflections on 2022/23.

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 vision, purpose and strategic priorities are as follows;

Vision and Purpose (Strategic Aims) - under review

- The **Vision** for the Education Directorate is to realise a **school-led self-improving system**.
- The **Purpose** for the Education Directorate is to create '**Better Schools, Better Citizens and Better Communities**'.
- The **Vision and Purpose** are both driven by a **child centred approach** and placing **children and young people** at the **heart** of all our **work and decisions**.

Education Improvement Plan (Business Plan) – 5 Priorities, supporting delivery of the Corporate priority areas identified in the Corporate Plan 2022/27 (detailed on page 3)

- **Improving educational standards and wellbeing** for pupils, particularly at KS4;
- **Securing quality ALN/Inclusion provision**, particularly to support Vulnerable groups of learners and those who are eFSM;
- **Transforming education** in line with responsive school support services and a school estate that is fit for the 21st Century;
- **Delivering effective young people and partnership provision**, with a focus on lifelong learning and leisure/recreation provision to meet community need; and,
- **Enhancing the performance culture for Education and Leisure** that delivers **better educational outcomes and improved value for money**.

Reflections on 2022/23

This report demonstrates how the Education Directorate contributes to the team (the council as a whole) aim of delivering our corporate priorities.

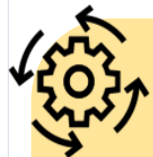
Director's overview & reflections on 2022/23 (continued)

Throughout the body of the report you will find examples of performance, both positive achievements and areas that we continue to focus on improving. We recognise that even the achievements are not yet completed but remain areas for progress to be maintained and improved upon where possible.

You will find some examples of these performance outcomes below and how they are supporting delivery of our corporate objectives



As a council we are looking to '**Maximise learning and skills for all to create a prosperous, thriving, resilient Blaenau Gwent**'. To support this, the Education Directorate aim to ensure that all children and young people are given the best start in life, enabling them to grow into fruitful adults living a healthy, fulfilling life whilst contributing to society and forming a valuable part of their community. We deliver this by ensuring higher levels of language acquisition and reading across the board, and overall enabling positive outcomes and attainment. We support children and young people to be in a good position to find skills and employment at the appropriate times and our NEET figures demonstrate our achievements in this area. The monitoring of school attendance and exclusion numbers is key to understand potential barriers to learning. This is one area that needs further work and something that we will be analysing in much greater depth. The number of eFSM are also increasing, again an area for further analysis and action. Our long term aim is to decrease the percentage of adults aged 16-24 with no qualifications and we are progressing well with achieving this reduction. We ensure that effective digital communication methods and systems are in place for both staff and pupils. Digital development will provide children and young people with opportunities to learn in these fast advancing digital times that we live in. As shown in the body of the report internal systems are being updated to move towards more online communication and ICT methods for both new school and existing school settings delivered through our Sustainable Communities for learning .



As a council we are looking to be '**an ambitious and innovative council delivering quality services at the right time and in the right place**'. To support this, the Education Directorate aim to deliver effective and efficient services within financial constraints. The Local Authority has a track record of spending within its education budget in recent years, with relatively small underspends for the past three years against the overall education budget. The financial outlook, however, for the public sector will be challenging over the period of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and close financial management will be essential to achieve value for money. The Education Directorate wants to drive forward the right leadership approaches, right staffing capacity, people with the right skills/capabilities and the right forward planning to prepare for the future needs of the service. DBS compliance sits at 100% for the Directorate which is extremely positive. The Directorate sickness absence levels have been reported as 7.10 days per Full Time Equivalent (FTE) which has come well under the Local Authority Corporate target of 10 days per FTE. It is recognised that one of the main strategic risks identified for the directorate is dependency on external funding to support key services and the workforce, such as Welsh Government Additional Learning Needs Reform funding, European Social Funding legacy work and the 21st Century Schools Programme.

Director's overview and reflections on 2022/23 (continued)



As a council we are looking to '**empower and support communities to be safe, independent and resilient**'. To deliver this, the Education Directorate support children and young people's educational learning opportunities whilst working collaboratively with the Aneurin Leisure and Awen Trust in a Council client function role, with an aim to ensure that all children and young peoples well-being and educational needs are catered for. The 2023 Estyn report of the Local Authority confirms that "Officers and elected members are committed to safeguarding young people in their local authority and there is an appropriate safeguarding culture within the local authority where all officers and elected members receive suitable safeguarding training. The way in which education and children's services work together has contributed well to improving multi-agency working and the support schools receive to manage the needs of pupils and their families more effectively." In school counselling services and youth support services are in place and working well. Our dedicated staff and the implementation of integrated systems and processes assist in preparing our children and young people for the world as safe, independent and resilient members of society.



As a council we are looking to '**Respond to the nature and climate crisis and enable connected communities**'. To support this, the Education Directorate aim to ensure that decarbonisation measures are at the forefront of our future planning and teaching. The environment and biodiversity considerations form the basis of all new school buildings and existing school upgrades and we encourage nature friendly management on school grounds. Effective partnership working enables us to provide advice and guidance to support our children and young people around biodiversity, decarbonisation, equalities, diversity and inclusion. These partnerships with schools and the Children's Grand Council are very effective and not only inform but support our children and young people to have a voice. We are and will continue to deliver effective sustainable communities for learning which are environmentally friendly and support the delivery of our educated young people who will in the future form our connected communities.



Lynn Phillips
Director of
Education



Cllr Sue Edmunds
Executive
Member
Education

Local Political Leadership, Governance and accountability

The structure of the Education Directorate provides clear levels of management and accountability. 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 produced corporately, and Education is compliant, the services also have additional regulatory requirements as part of the Estyn Local Government Education Services (LGES) framework.

The Internal Planning framework to the right demonstrates how reporting and monitoring works throughout the Council to create this 'golden thread'.

Progress against actions

This report is broken down into the Directorate priority areas previously detailed in the 'Director's Overview' on page 7.

The following overview pages and case studies detail our performance for the period along with some associated achievements and challenges aligned to supporting delivery of the corporate priority areas identified in the Corporate Plan 2022/27,

Planning Framework

Corporate	Well-being Plan Partnership plan for Blaenau Gwent reported to Partnership Scrutiny Committee
Corporate	The Council's Corporate Plan These are the priorities of the Council and form its business plan – reported to Corporate Overview and Performance Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet
Corporate	Finance and Performance Report Councils performance monitoring report (supported by the information in this report) reported to Corporate Overview and Performance Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet
Directorate	Education Six Monthly and Annual Performance Report Report of the Director of Education reported to People Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet and Council
Director, Head of Service & Team Manager	Business Planning and Self- Evaluation Updated quarterly includes – priorities, actions, risk, projects, PI's and FEP monitoring
Individuals	Performance Coaching Individuals have monthly and annual coaching using the business plans

Inspection of Blaenau Gwent Local Government Education Service

At the end of 2022, Blaenau Gwent Council was subject to an Estyn inspection with the three inspection areas being :-

- Inspection Area 1 – Outcomes
Standards and progress overall
Standards and progress of specific groups
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning
- Inspection Area 2 – Education Services and Provision
Support for school improvement
Support for vulnerable learners
Other education support services
- Inspection Area 3 – Leadership and Management
Quality and effectiveness of leaders and managers
Self-evaluation and improvement planning
Professional learning
Safeguarding arrangements
Use of resources

Inspection of Blaenau Gwent Local Government Education Service

Following the full inspection week, the Council received initial feedback and findings from the Inspection team (2nd December 2022). This was followed up by a draft and receipt of the final report, which included the inspectorate findings and that identified 3 recommendations for improvement. The full report also details the inspectorate's findings against the 4 local questions. The main findings, included:-

- The local authority has made good progress with its education services since it was last inspected around ten years ago as important areas for improvement have largely been addressed. Senior officers and elected members have a strong commitment to education, and this is reflected in the funding given to schools and education services.
- The local authority generally plans well to make sure that it has suitable education provision to meet the needs of every child and young person. Over the past decade, the local authority has successfully reduced surplus places in schools and improved the conditions of its school buildings. The local authority is suitably developing its Welsh-medium education provision. However, whilst there have been some positive developments in provision for pupils with additional learning needs, the quality of planning for future provision is variable.
- There are many strengths in the local authority's work to reduce the impact of deprivation on educational outcomes and its support for families in low-income households. There are also many strengths in the services to support children and young people's well-being and promote positive relationships.
- The authority has worked with its regional school improvement service to strengthen the challenge and support it provides to schools. This work has greater impact for children in non-maintained and primary age settings than for young people in secondary age settings. Provision for young people was too slow to improve in two schools placed in statutory categories.
- Despite strengths in education services, corporate leaders have not ensured that their vision and strategic aims for education are fully understood by other officers, elected members, school staff and external partners. Also, corporate leaders have not ensured that the corporate plan is supported by coherent delivery plans for education that include related actions and measurable success criteria. Overall, the quality of self-evaluation, planning for improvement, and performance management is not strong enough.

The inspectorate has identified 3 recommendations for improvement that the local authority will use to drive forward progress. These areas for development take account of shortcomings identified through the inspection process. The local authority's plans are being updated and the Education Improvement Plan (EIP) and Self-Evaluation Report (SER) being revised. Importantly, developmental work has already begun on addressing the recommendations that are outlined below:

- R1. Improve the corporate leadership of education services;
- R2. Improve the quality of self-evaluation, strategic planning and performance management; and,
- R3. Accelerate improvements in provision for secondary age pupils in schools causing concern.

Inspection of Blaenau Gwent Local Government Education Service

Blaenau Gwent Council has welcomed an Estyn report into its education services which shows that the authority has made good progress since its last inspection and that important areas for improvement have been addressed.

Estyn carried out their inspection over several days in late November/early December, and engaged with schools, children and young people, parents and other key stakeholders.

The final report recognised a strong commitment to education by senior officers and councillors; good planning to ensure the educational needs of all learners are met; the growth of Welsh medium education and, pleasingly, the council's work to support vulnerable learners and families in the community through its anti-poverty agenda and school support services.

There are areas that the inspectorate identified for improvement, including 3 recommendations. The Council is proactively responding to the report's findings, including ensuring the vision and aims for education are shared more widely across the authority; improving self-evaluation, improvement planning and performance management; and accelerating improvements in any schools causing concern.

Councillor Sue Edmunds, Blaenau Gwent Council's Cabinet Member for People & Education says:

"We welcome Estyn's report into our Education services, which recognises the overall progress made and our continued commitment to providing the very best educational opportunities and well-being tools to enhance the life chances of our children and young people.

"We are working hard to continue improving the quality of our service and we are determined to move forward with our vision for "Better Schools; Better Citizens; and Better Communities.

"We acknowledge the recommendations made by the inspectorate on how we can further improve and look forward to building on the good work already started in these areas."



You can read the Estyn report in full [here](#).



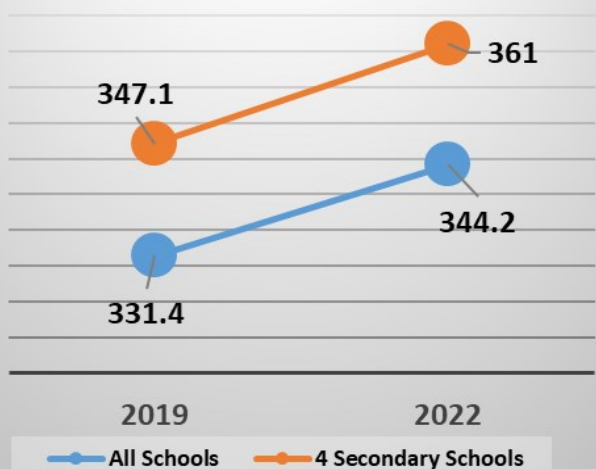


Improve outcomes and well-being for pupils, particularly at KS4

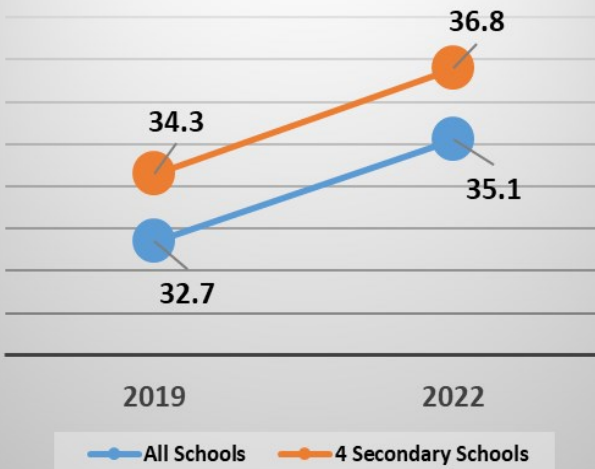


The **2022 KS4 results were positive** and in line with the School Development Plan targets set by the 4 secondary settings. There were improvements in 29 out of 32 key measures. Some examples are shown below :-
 (Note: only 2019 and 2022 comparison data shown due to routine data collection suspended / 2022 data included for self-evaluation purposes only)

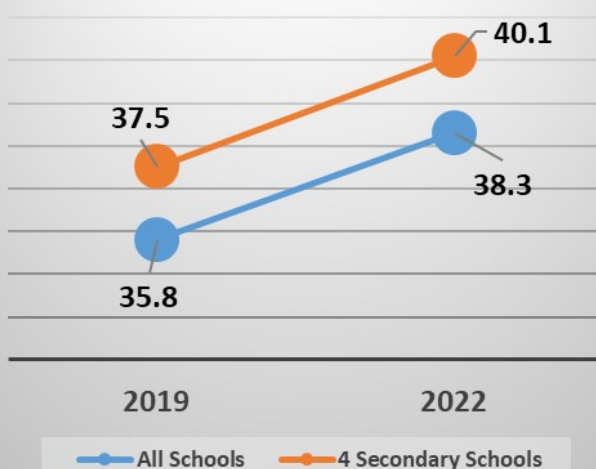
Capped 9



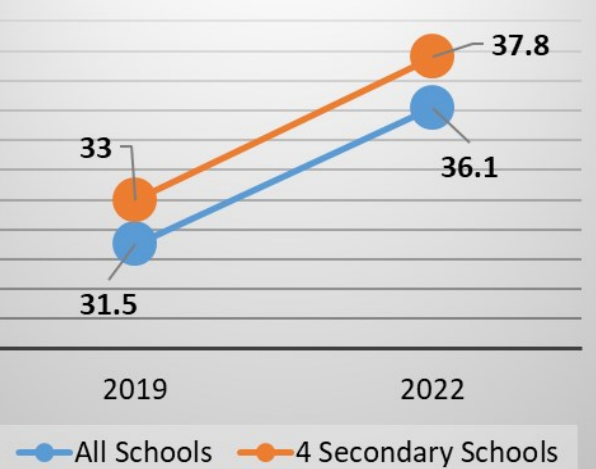
Numeracy Measure



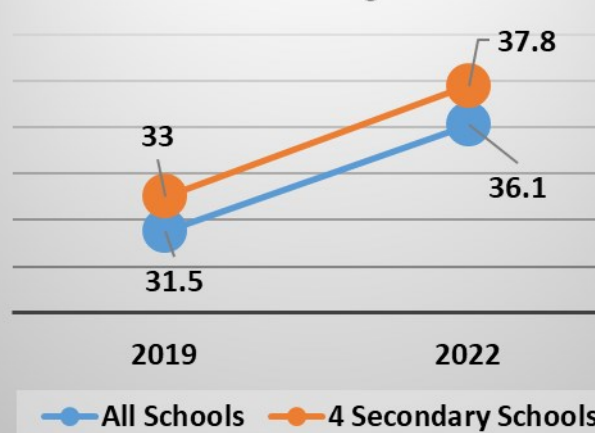
Literacy Measure



Science Measure



Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge

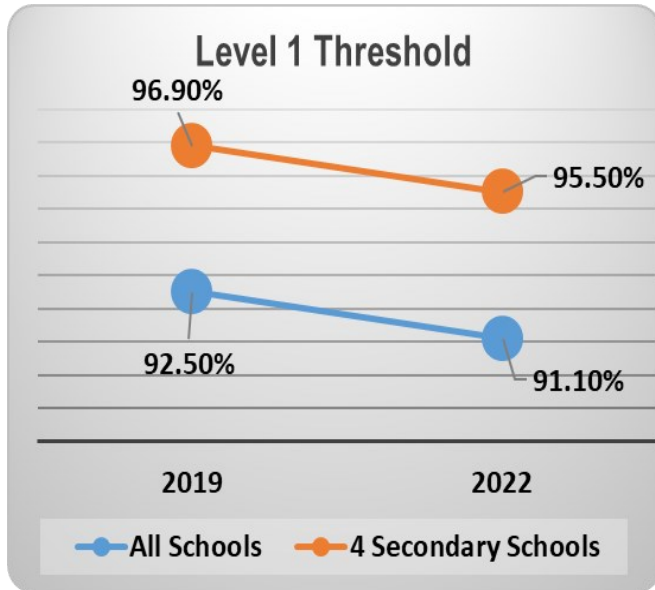


IMPROVED PERFORMANCE IN ALL 4 SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THESE KEY AREAS





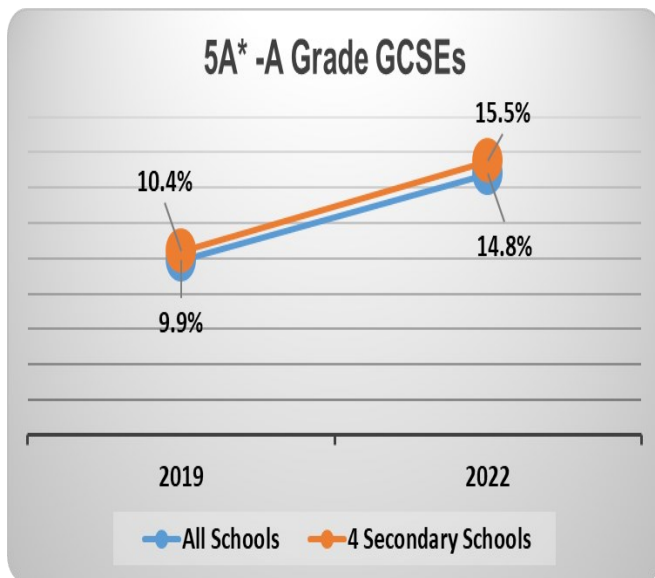
Improve outcomes and well-being for pupils, particularly at KS4



Blaenau Gwent continue to deliver a number of services that offer support for young people aged 11-25 who at risk of becoming or are currently not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). The Youth Service exceeded that of the all-Wales means for reach and accredited learning outcomes.

The levels of NEETs at 1.6% are at their lowest levels i.e., 9 young people.

Page 135



Level 2 inclusive is Blaenau Gwent's best performance.



Going forward we will monitor and ensure the pace of change in school's causing concern is improved.

We have seen a **reduction** in **Schools Causing Concern** from **6 schools in 2019** to only **2 schools in 2022.**



The partnership with Schools, Coleg Gwent and Post 16 providers has strengthened through the establishment of the Post 16 Strategic Partnership Board.

A-level A*-C and A*-E grades continue to be strong and were in line with the all-Wales means at 98.4% for Blaenau Gwent learners at Coleg Gwent settings.



Page 136



The Youth Service is established as an **accreditation centre** with Youth Workers also providing support for parents of Elected Home Education (EHE) young people wanting to deliver units.

Currently has contact with **18 EHE young people**, to provide a link with the service.

An **Induction Programme** for new headteachers and aspiring deputy headteachers has been delivered over 5 days with a range of areas covered including safeguarding, equalities and Inclusion.

Very positive feedback from participants.

A number of Blaenau Gwent senior leaders have applied for the 'aspiring headteacher' programme.



Schools continue to work with the Education Directorate to provide ideas and challenge on school improvement and inclusion, including on value for money.

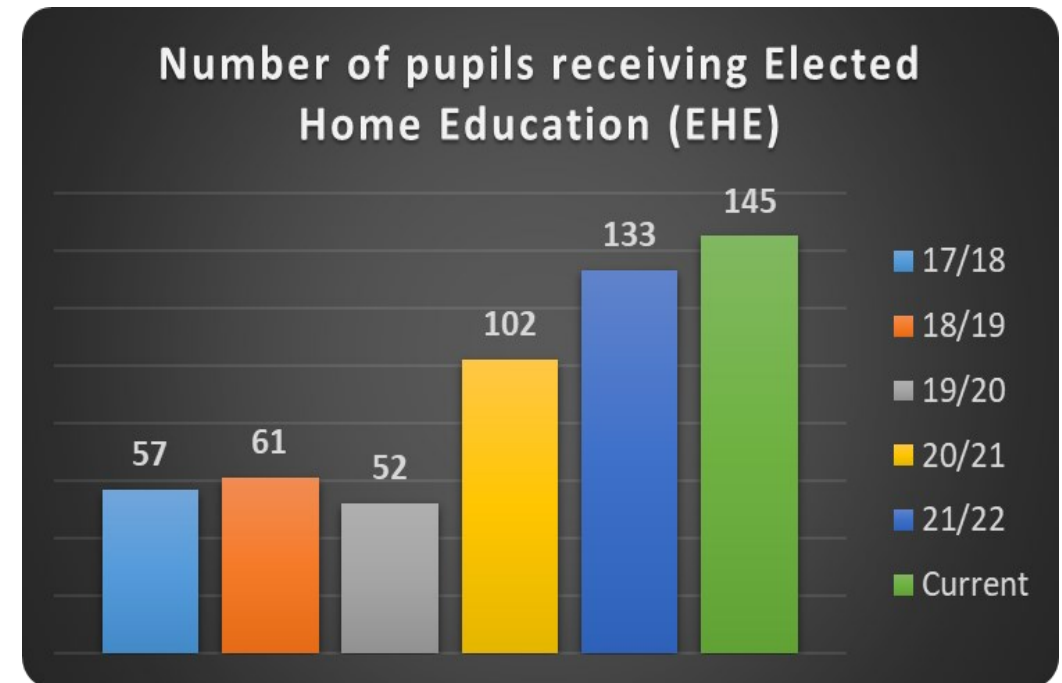


Elected Home Education within Blaenau Gwent

As demonstrated in the chart there has been an increase in the number of home educated children within Blaenau Gwent over the past few years. Elected Home Education (EHE) pupils continue to be supported by the Education Welfare Service, however this needs to be monitored closely going forward to ensure that the number of visits increase in line with the above.

There are currently 145 pupils on the EHE database (16/02/23) compared to 137 for the same period last year. This is an increase of 5.8%.

Twenty-nine of these pupils are from the Gypsy Roma Traveller Community (GRT).



Between 1st September 2022 and 16th February 2023, 38 children became EHE. Thirty of these were secondary aged; seven were primary age and one a reception age child whose mum intends to keep her home schooled.

Seven children were from schools outside of the Local Authority, seven children were from Ebbw Fawr Learning Community, 6 from Tredegar and 6 from Brynmawr.

Of the above, 22 learners decided to return to school and 6 were issued with attendance orders due to adequate home education requirements not being fulfilled and also returned to school within the stated time.



Securing quality ALN/Inclusion provision, particularly to support Vulnerable groups of learners and those who are eFSM



In addition to Welsh Government funding allocated directly to schools to support with the implementation of **ALN reforms**, the Council has also been allocated **additional funding of £215,000**. This is to provide high quality education and to improve pupil outcomes for all learners with an Additional Learning Need. The funding will focus on **improving additional learning provision, increased provision for complex needs and mental health and wellbeing support**.



Pen-y-Cwm and River Centre secondary site remodelling is now **underway**. Further work to increase capacity forms part of mid-term and long-term plans.



Current Work at Pen-y-Cwm is subject to investment circa £150,000.



This will reinstate specialist areas and includes the development of de-escalation spaces in 12 classrooms, renewing sensory equipment and developing the outdoor provision to include a hobbit house


Model photos showing examples of de-escalation space and hobbit house





Securing quality ALN/Inclusion provision, particularly to support Vulnerable groups of learners and those who are eFSM



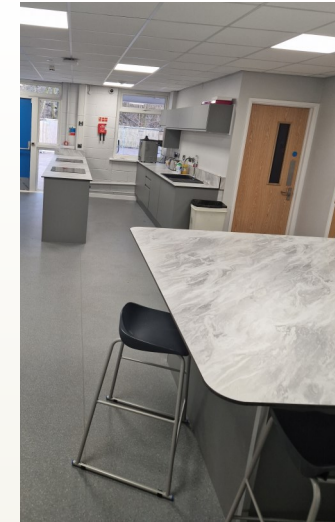
 **Better links** have been developed **with early years and health**, and a more comprehensive **tracking tool is being created** in order to improve the tracking of pupils with Additional Learning Needs **to ensure better planning of provision.**



Current remodelling of The River Centre Secondary Campus is subject to **investment circa £450,000.**

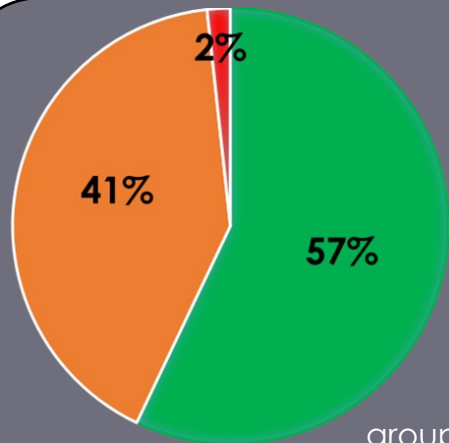


The campus will undertake a complete refurb — which includes 3 extra classrooms including sensory provision, new furniture, home economics and independent living area, outdoor muga and gym.





Securing quality ALN/Inclusion provision, particularly to support Vulnerable groups of learners and those who are eFSM



Additional Learning Needs implementation Review - A questionnaire was sent to all schools in Blaenau Gwent in order for them to identify where they feel more support is needed in terms of processes under the new Additional Learning Needs legislation. 16 questions were asked and the schools scored each area based on a Green, Amber, Red categorisation.

25 questionnaires were sent and 17 returned

numerous areas for development within schools.

The chart details the response breakdown.

We (the LA) support this identified development via ALN cluster groups and offering support to ALNCoS via the ALN/ Inclusive Practice Service

The identified 'Red' areas relate to the opportunity for delivery of review meetings in the medium of Welsh



Inclusion policies, strategies and processes

in the current form have been distributed to governing bodies for all schools.

Policies translated to be in the **Welsh language** also to provide equity in our schools



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.

This represents the highest level of all Local Authorities In Wales as has been the case for the past 10 years

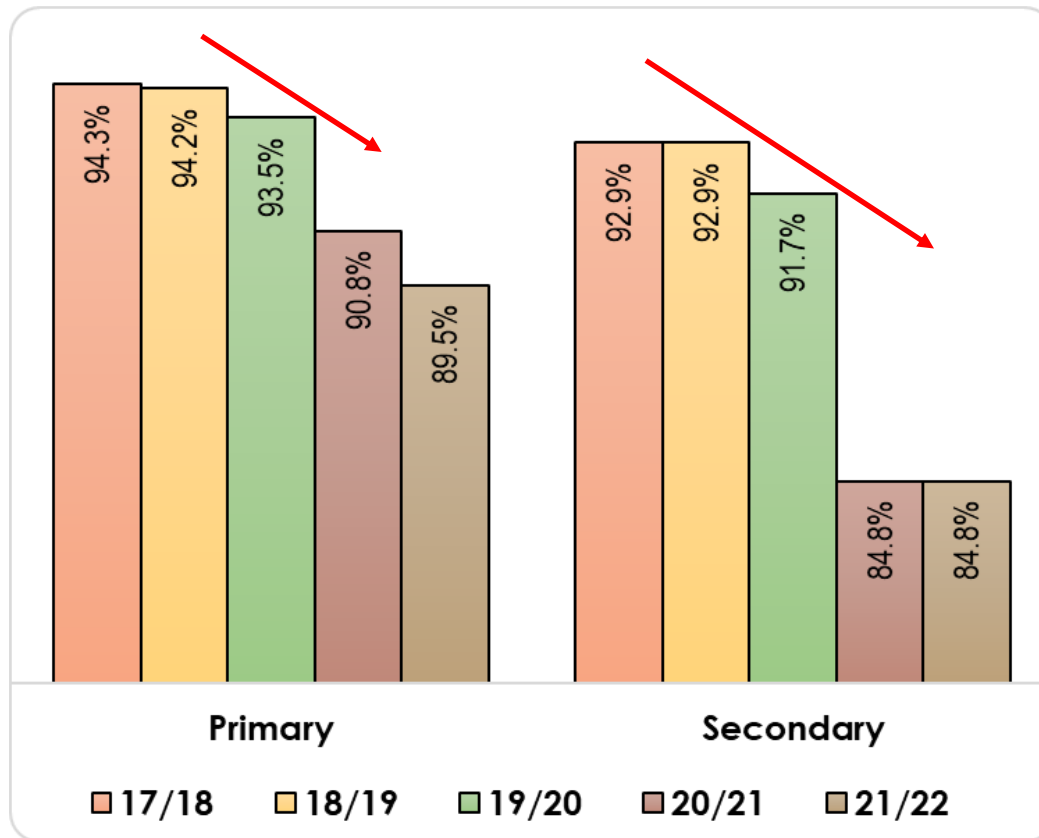




Securing quality ALN/Inclusion provision, particularly to support Vulnerable groups of learners and those who are eFSM



Joint meetings between Head teachers, senior Education Welfare Officer and Youth Service Manager have taken place with secondary schools to support improving attendance and reducing exclusions. Further analysis will take place in order to identify the reason for decline and put mitigating actions in place.



Three of our primary schools have been supported to set up a **nurture provision** to support pupils with wellbeing issues, often as a result of returning to school after significant periods of blended learning as a result of Covid. There are increasing numbers of pupils with attachment concerns, which are exhibiting themselves in behaviours such as outbursts of frustration or school avoidance. Since the implementation of the Nurture (**Cwch**) model, exclusions in these schools has reduced. We aim to share the experience in the spring term with all other schools as a model of good practice.



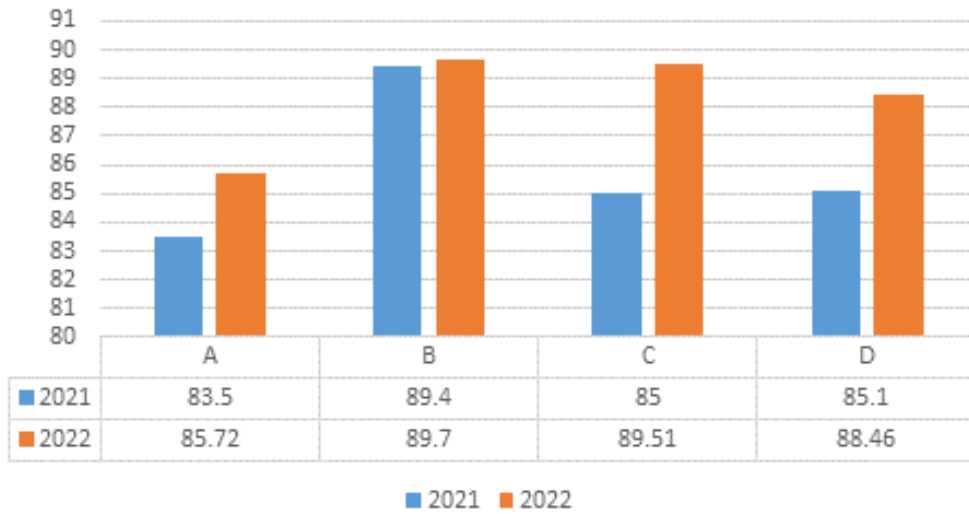
Attendance/exclusions are mirroring the national upward/downward trends.



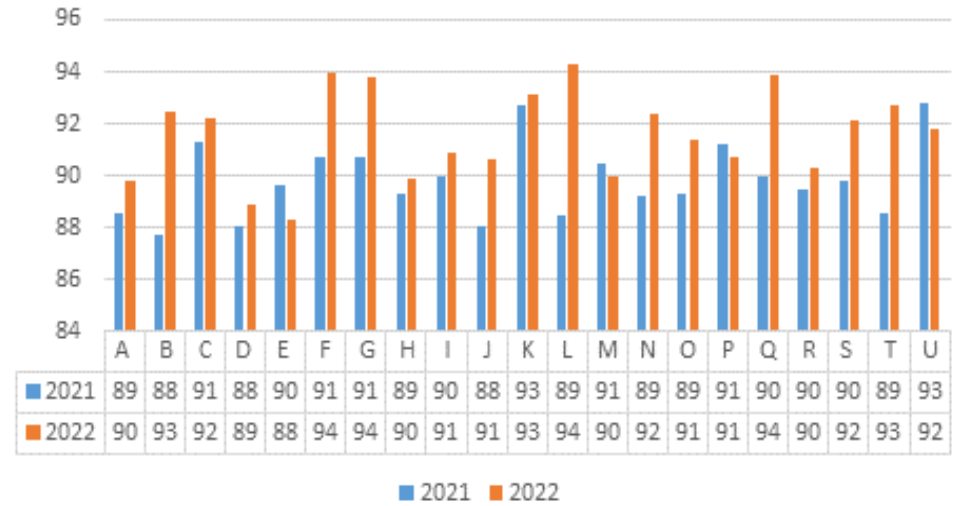
Securing quality ALN/Inclusion provision, particularly to support Vulnerable groups of learners and those who are eFSM



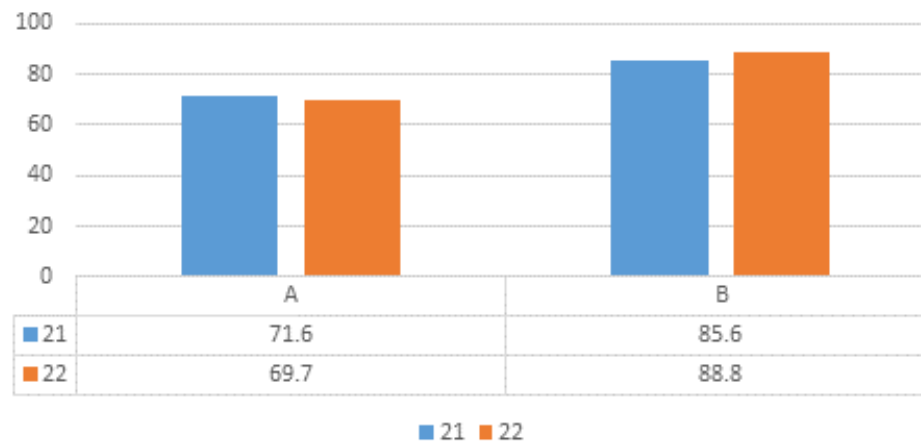
Secondary Attendance Data w/e 25th November



Primary Attendance Data w/e 25th November



Special School Attendance Data w/e 25th November



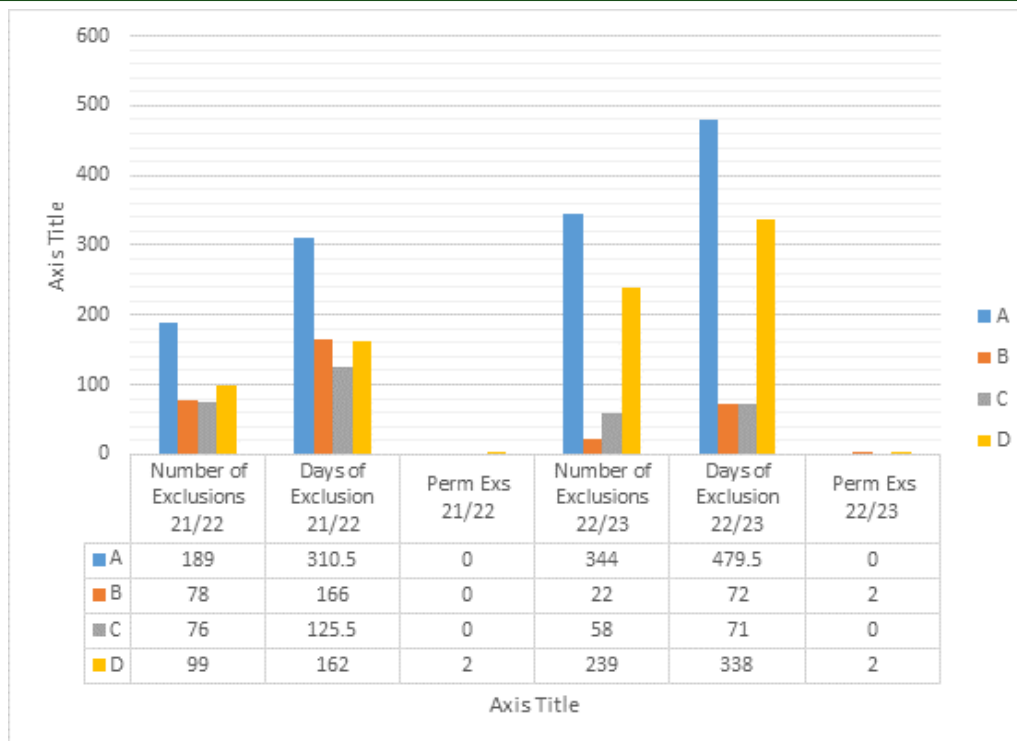


Securing quality ALN/Inclusion provision, particularly to support Vulnerable groups of learners and those who are eFSM



The exclusion data below is showing the increase for the period 2nd September 2022 to the 10th March 2023 when compared to the same period last year. However, similar patterns of increases are being experienced by LAs across Wales post COVID.

Data analysis	Number of Exclusions (Increase)	Days of Exclusion (Increase)	Perm Exclusion (Increase)
Secondary	221	196.5	4
Primary	8	36	0
Special Schools	2	20.5	0
Increase/Decrease	231	253	4



Secondary Exclusions (Period above 2nd Sept – 10th March)

School A and School D have both increased the number of their exclusions and the days lost to exclusions, whilst schools B and C have seen a reduction. The Education Welfare Service are working closely with the schools experiencing an increase in order to address the reasons behind exclusion.

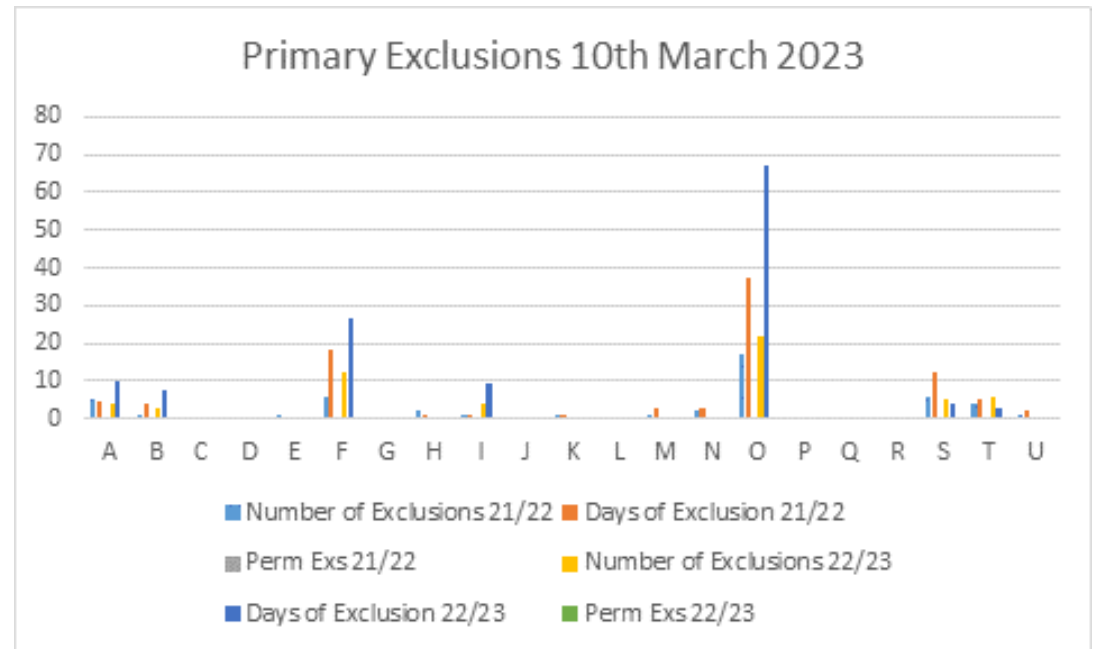


Securing quality ALN/Inclusion provision, particularly to support Vulnerable groups of learners and those who are eFSM



Primary Exclusions (Period above 2nd Sept – 10th March)

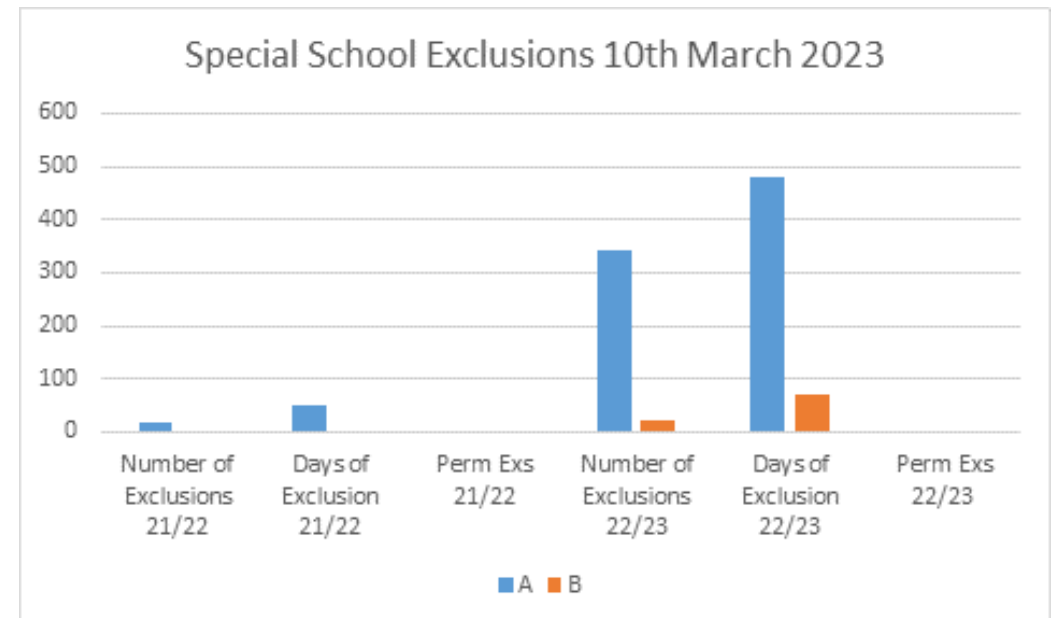
Positively, only 7 of BG's primary schools have issued any exclusions this year to date compared to 13 schools for the same period last year. However, the number of exclusions and the days lost are higher in 5 out of the 7 schools that are issuing exclusions. Education Welfare Service are working closely with those schools in order to support early intervention to further reduce exclusions. One of the schools has developed a nurture base which has had a positive impact on the amount of exclusions.



Special School Exclusions (Period above 2nd Sept – 10th March)

This period has only seen exclusions from one of our special schools. There has been an increase in the number of exclusions in this school and days lost. The Education Welfare Service are working in partnership with the school to look at support that can be provided to address reasons behind exclusions.

The 3 main reasons for exclusions across all settings are persistent disruptive behaviour (279), verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against an adult (198) and physical assault against a pupil (98). When analysing exclusion data, it would be important to take into account that it may involve a small number of learners who are excluded more than once.





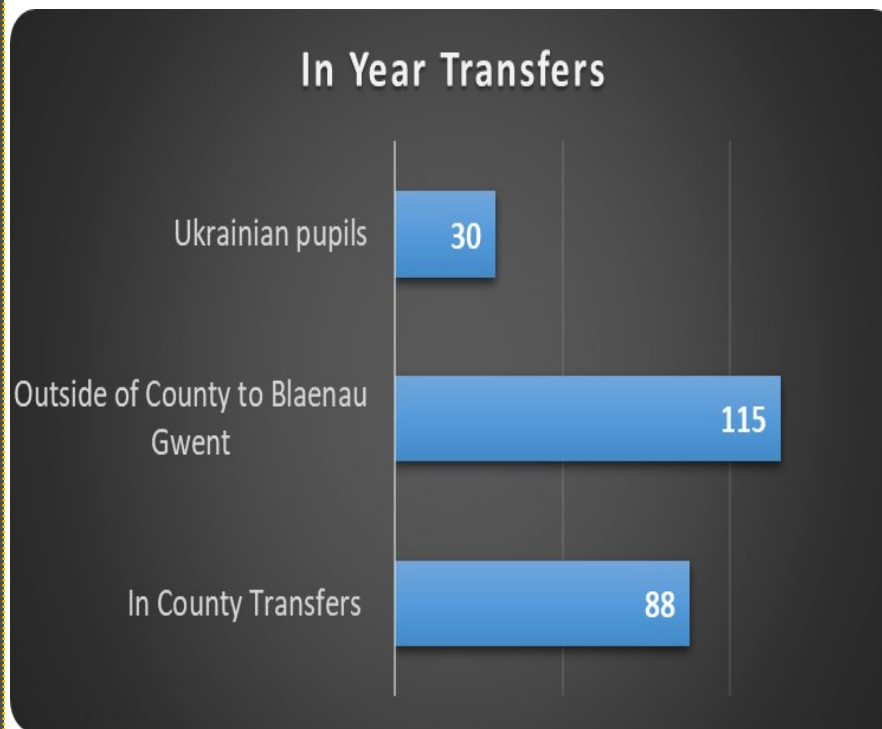
Transforming education in line with responsive school support services and a school estate that is fit for the 21st Century



All **admission rounds** were completed for 2022/23 academic year with **100% of first preferences being met**. This is attributable to the effective monitoring and management of school capacities and pupil places along with the continued achievement of surplus place reduction.

There have been **233 In Year Transfers**

between April and December 2022, the majority of applicants moving into Blaenau Gwent 100% of these transfers were **processed within 15 days**



The 2023/24 **Home to School Transport Policy** has been published

The transport appeals procedure has been implemented and is working effectively with **1 appeal being upheld** within the period

School admissions is now a fully online process

Options for further **engagement and promotion** is being explored to **increase the number of in-time applications** for reception and secondary school



INTEGRATION / COLLABORATION - Strategic links with key partners such as the EAS, Coleg Gwent, Schools, WBL providers continue to be effective, ensuring that Blaenau Gwent is well placed to continue with the transformation of the Education service and supporting our children and young people.





Transforming education in line with responsive school support services and a school estate that is fit for the 21st Century



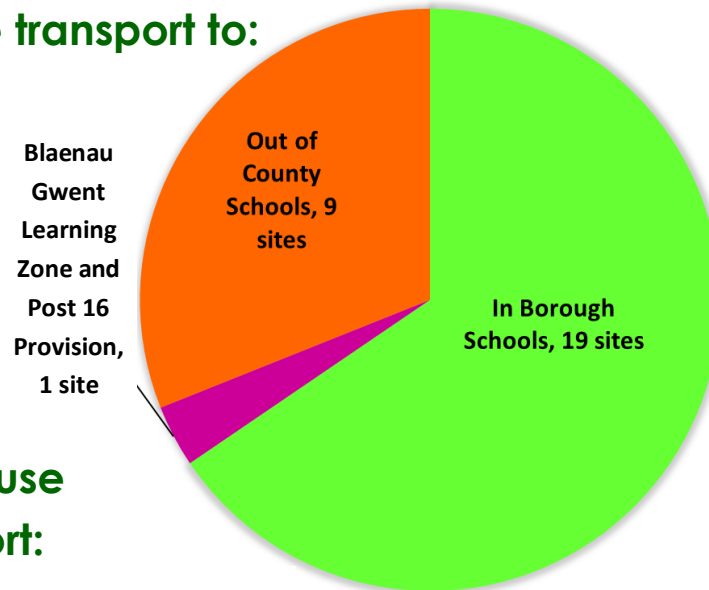
INTEGRATION - An effective internal partnership between the Education Directorate and the Build Environment, Environment and Regeneration continues, leading to the delivery of an efficient home to school / college transport provision.



Home to School Transport budget is indicating an **overspend of £1m**, which can be attributed to an increase in pupil numbers utilising mainstream and ALN transport to settings in both primary and secondary schools within Blaenau Gwent and pupils attending out of county placements.

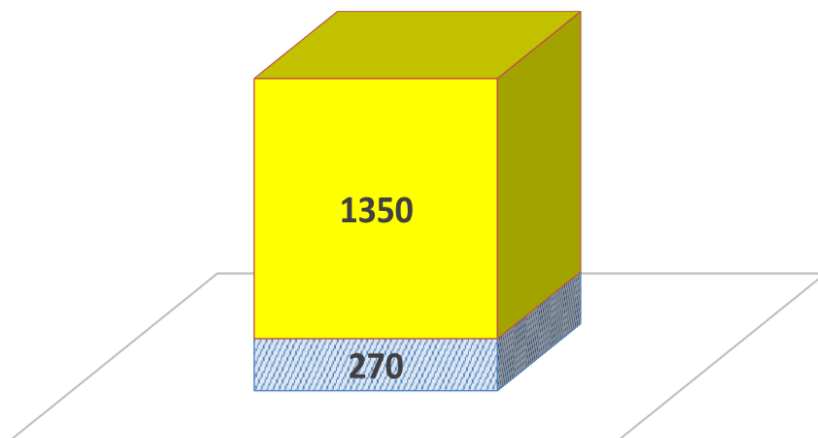
We procure and monitor 30 operators providing transport for over 80 contracts. This includes mainstream, Welsh-medium, faith education and specialist provision for ALN.

We transport to:



Over 1600 school pupils use Home to School transport:

■ ALN Pupils ■ Mainstream pupils



We provide support for over 550 Post 16 students living in Blaenau Gwent, they are provided with a discounted bus ticket or travel grant

£600,000 of this will be funded from the cost of living reserve to support a temporary **20% uplift** provided to contractors to facilitate a temporary increase **for fuel costs**. Following

a monthly review process which monitored cost pressures, the uplift is due to finish 31st March 2023.

In recognition of the **cost of living crisis**, the Council has agreed to apply an inflationary price increase of 10% effective 1st April 2023.



Transforming education in line with responsive school support services and a school estate that is fit for the 21st Century



Cymunedau **Dysgu** Cynaliadwy 
Sustainable Communities for Learning

The delivery of the Sustainable Communities for Learning **Band B programme** is well underway with an **investment of circa £26m** into the school estate.

The suitability and condition of the school estate is improving with circa 61% categorised as A/B

The Band B Programme seeks to deliver the following key projects:

- **Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg Refurbishment**
- **Ebbw Fawr Primary Redevelopment**
 - Glyncoed Primary New Build
 - Rhos y Fedwen Primary Refurbishment
- **Continued Secondary School Re-modelling**

Progress on Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg refurbishment and Glyncoed Primary new build can be found on Page 35

Page 147



LONG TERM -

Estyn / WG ICT & Digitalisation Thematic Review took place in January 2023. Education colleagues, Schools, SRS & EAS were interviewed by WG & Estyn, initial feedback on our progress was positive.



Surplus places are reducing to the targets set in the School Organisation Policy at 15%. The Local Authority does have some elements of sufficiency of school places emerging that will need to be monitored closely, especially in the secondary/ special school sectors.



Good progress has been made against the Welsh Education Strategic Plan (WESP), including **Welsh Government approval of the Blaenau Gwent 10 Year WESP** and the new **Welsh medium seedling school** moving to project implementation stage (**full planning approval**). Momentum for the delivery of the project now needs to be maintained as the delivery of the WESP targets will be largely delivered through this provision and immersion proposals.



Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Welsh in Education Strategic Plan

Period of the plan September 2022 - September 2025



Transforming education in line with responsive school support services and a school estate that is fit for the 21st Century



The ICT Infrastructure and Connectivity Project - The Local Authority has again made strong progress in line with its strategy for improving standards in ICT. This has involved continued progression of the Infrastructure and Connectivity Project, implementation of Waves 1-4 of the Welsh Government HWB EdTech Programme and work towards the development of a strategy and associated sustainability plan for both infrastructure and devices in Blaenau Gwent.

ICT & Digitalisation Blaenau Gwent Context

In 2016 Blaenau Gwent invested approx.

£650K in ICT infrastructure as part of the Infrastructure and Connectivity Project

- In 2019/2020 Welsh Government launched the **Hwb Ed Tech Programme** this allowed the Authority to continue on our digital journey to further improve our network infrastructure and to replace all end of life devices within Schools
 - Device sustainability- Schools are now using a 20% plan to refresh devices over 5-year period in order to maintain the standard of devices achieved through the Hwb Ed Tech Programme. Individual sustainability plans have been discussed and agreed with schools
- In collaboration with the Shared Resource Service (SRS) Education have worked alongside all schools within the Service Level Agreement (SLA) to standardise all infrastructure to ensure adherence to the Education Digital Standards. This includes broadband connectivity, data network cabinet standards, routers and switches, cabling standards, wireless network standards, device management standards and web filtering standards.

The **Educational Digital Standards** are designed to assist schools to understand, manage and implement their digital environment. The Standards also provide guidance on how schools should future-proof their digital environment to meet the needs of a more digitally focused school curriculum. The standards suggest all infrastructure work undertaken to meet the standards should be carefully considered, planned and procured in compliance with national procurement regulations and installed by professional organisations.



Transforming education in line with responsive school support services and a school estate that is fit for the 21st Century



A draft **ICT strategy** will be issued to schools for consultation during the Spring term 2023, the Vision for ICT within Education is as follows:

'To secure continued development ensuring that all learners regardless of age or demographic have continued safe access to a blend of digital resources, hardware and cloud-based learning throughout the course of their education'.



Infrastructure and Connectivity

Digital Inclusion

Device Sustainability

Migration to and use of Hwb

Digital tools and resources

Training and Development

Online Safety

Support for Schools

Education Management and support systems

Blaenau Gwent corporate approach and overview



There are 9 priority areas identified within the strategy. These areas have been focused on heavily over the past 2 years, we will continue to progress these in line with the Digital competency framework.



Delivering effective young people and partnership provision, with a focus on lifelong learning and leisure/recreation provision to meet community need



The Education Portfolio is now in the third year of a five year agreement with **the Aneurin Leisure Trust (ALT)**. The relationship between the Council and the Leisure Trust during this time has been transformed and positive outcomes continue to be achieved.



Page 150

The visual dashboard here highlights progress against the Key Performance Indicators:

Area	Target	Outcome	Key Drivers
Governance, Leadership & Advocacy	Green >90%		Waiting on date for the Strategic Board meeting. Once completed this KPI will revert back to green. All else on track
	Amber <90% >80%		
	Red <80%		
Financial Sustainability	Green 1% of Target		Catering is currently not seeing the impact of the cost of living crisis with sales continuing to show good YOY growth. Reforecast due in November to set a realistic outcome on year end.
	Amber <1% of Target		
	Red >5% of Target		
Use of the Services	Green Target met		Marked as Amber due to footfall counter issues. Estimates have been taken using a calculation of income as a % of sites that we know are accurate
	Amber 10% of target		
	Red >10% of Target		
Operational Performance	Green 80%-100%		All performing well. Receiving great feedback from function bookings in BHAP where the centre (bar 1 day) is now fully booked for the remainder of the calendar year
	Amber 70%-79%		
	Red 0%-79%		
Customer & Staff Satisfaction	Green >55%		Ahead of benchmark for Sports Centres. should be in a position to launch NPS into all sites during Q2
	Amber <55% >45%		
	Red <45%		
Library Services Standards	Green >80%		No Full audit to date. Scaled down audit 21/22 resulted in all 12 core measures being met. The report has gone to BGCBC
	Amber 70% - 79%		
	Red <79%		
Environmental Sustainability	Green Within 5% of Target		To date (September) utilities are better than Target which is set at 6% lower than base year.
	Amber Within 10% of Target		
	Red >10% of Target		
Asset Management	Green >90%		To date (Q2) 10 activities planned 6 completed.
	Amber <90% >80%		
	Red <80%		

Delivering effective young people and partnership provision, with a focus on lifelong learning and leisure/recreation provision to meet community need



Through a partnership approach the Youth Service now includes a focus on Youth Homelessness and Wellbeing.

The Youth Service provides a number of high quality projects providing young people with personal support, advice, guidance, advocacy and counselling services in school and community settings this is supported by a well-developed workforce highlighted again in the Youth Work in Wales 2020/2021 Statistical Release where **Blaenau Gwent is 3rd (best) in Wales, as having a trained, skilled and qualified workforce. Blaenau Gwent was 1st across the region and 1st across the family mean.**

The Youth and Community Team continue to support young people to prevent youth **homelessness and to support mental health and wellbeing.**

The team has continued to support individuals on a one to one basis, along with groups and community projects. These young people are often in precarious housing situations, and support is based around navigating appropriate information, advice and guidance from other services to help provide some stability and to enable them to improve their housing situation. This has continued to develop, with ongoing relationships with partners growing and becoming more efficient and effective.

During the last academic year, **34 young people were supported on a one to one basis.**



We will continue to further establish Youth Homelessness and wellbeing programmes, funded by the Youth Support Grant.



The service area continues to meet regularly with Youth Support Services and partners through the Raising Aspirations Group, to maintain and further develop a co-ordinated, partnership approach.

Meetings also continue with Secondary School head teachers and /or link staff, to ensure they are fully involved where appropriate.



Safeguarding is an important aspect of the Youth Service.

Between September 2021 and August 2022, **44 referrals (DTRs)** were made to Social Services. . More detail relating to these are included in the Joint Safeguarding Report <https://democracy.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/ielistDocuments.aspx?Clid=1248&MId=2555&Ver=4&LLL=0>



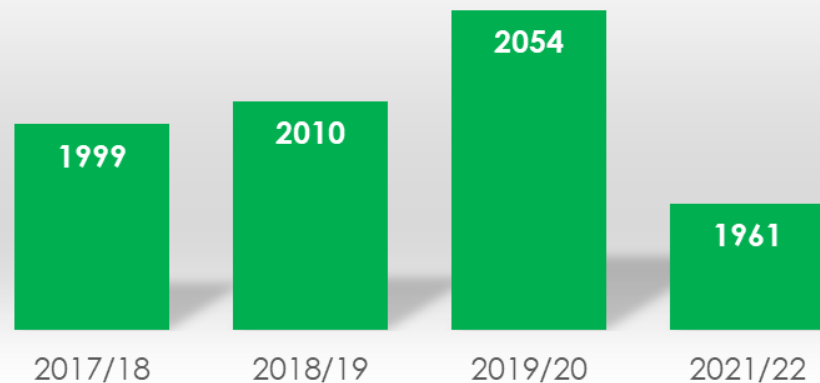
Delivering effective young people and partnership provision, with a focus on lifelong learning and leisure/recreation provision to meet community need



The number of 11-25 year olds supported by the Youth Service

during 2021/22 is 1961 (Reach of 17%). This is lower than the 2019/20 pre Covid data, but shows that the reach has almost returned to pre-pandemic levels, despite still working within restrictions at the beginning of the year.

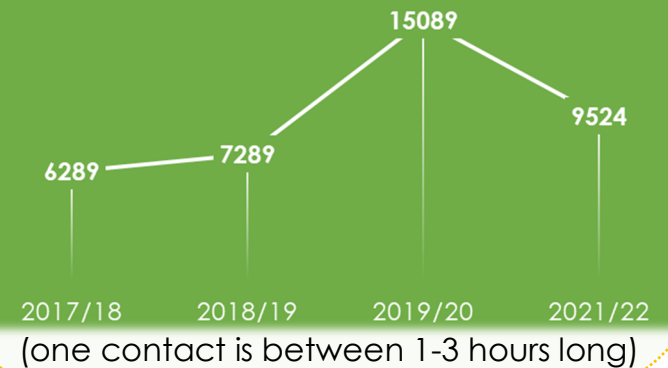
Number of 11-25 year olds supported by the Youth Service



The number of additional contacts made with anonymous young people (not registered with the service)

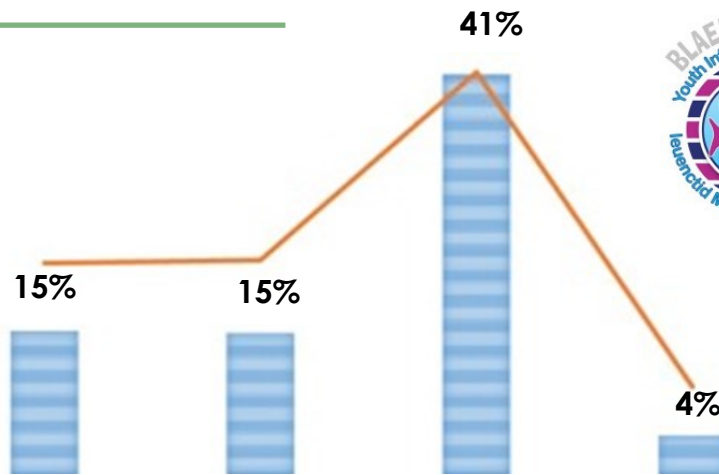
through the 11-25 Counselling Service, detached youth work, outreach and out of school activities and events with some online activities offered

ADDITIONAL CONTACTS MADE WITH ANONYMOUS PEOPLE



Page 152

Out of the number of 11-25 year olds supported by the Youth Service above, the % that have gained nationally recognised qualifications has decreased



	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2021/22
Number of young people supported (11-25) that gained accredited qualifications	306	301	847	86
Number of qualifications achieved	448	456	851	188



Long Term - Reliance on external funding is a risk.

However, securing European Social Funding until 2023 has provided some stability with the most vulnerable young people in the community having support for the past five years. SPF applications have been submitted which includes funding to continue the support for young people through the Inspire programmes. Welsh Government Youth Support Grant funding has now been given as a 3 year indicative allocation. This has allowed better planning for the future, both internally and with external partners.



Delivering effective young people and partnership provision, with a focus on lifelong learning and leisure/recreation provision to meet community need;

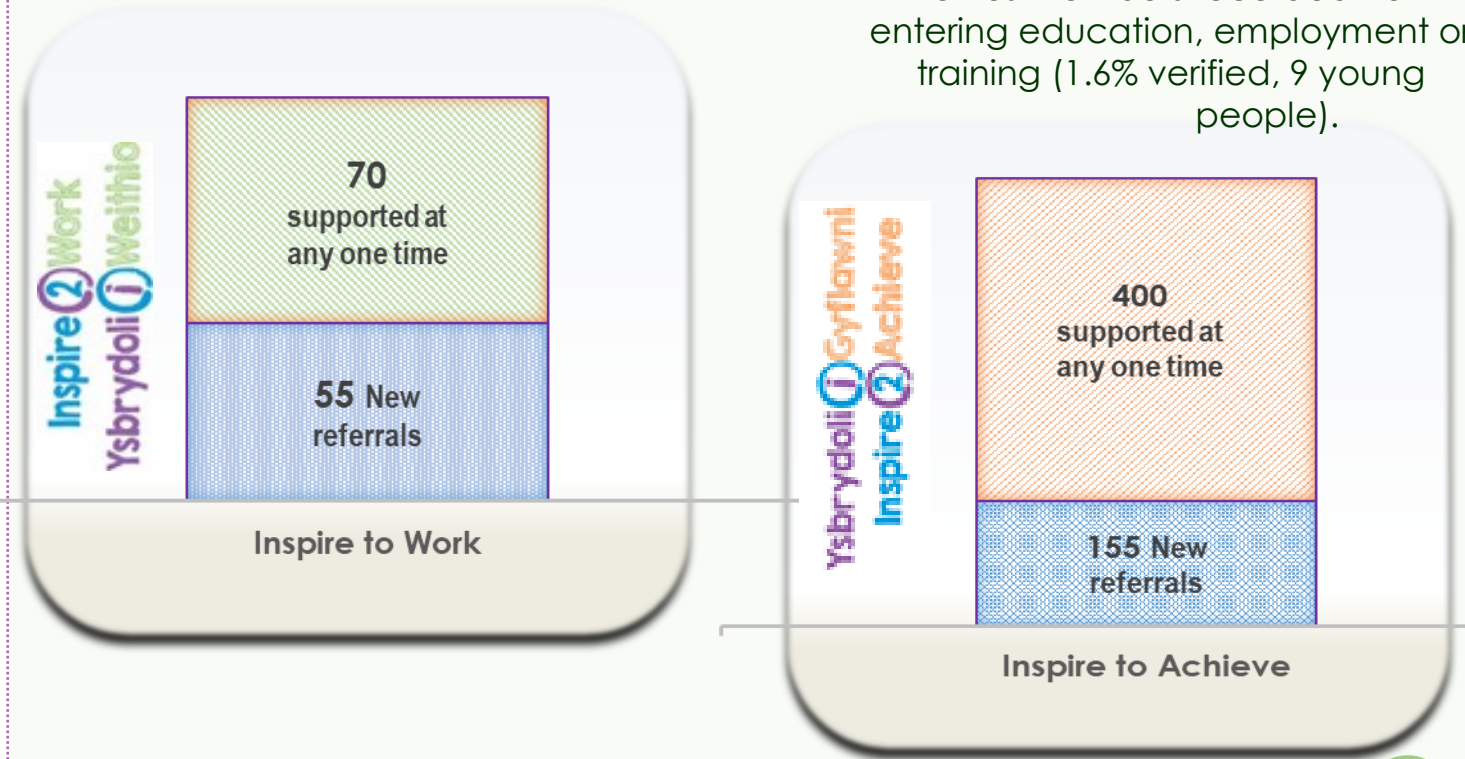


Both core and external funding has been secured to **continue a variety of projects to meet identified needs** and include:-

- Inspire 2 Achieve;
- Inspire 2 Work;
- Youth Homelessness;
- Mental Health and Wellbeing;
- Duke of Edinburgh;
- Detached and Outreach Youth Workers;
- Positive Futures (ASB programmes);
- Open for Youth Nights;
- Youth Clubs;
- Youth Information Service;
- Young Ambassadors (YAMs);
- 11-25 Counselling Service;
- Young Reps Volunteering Programme; and
- school holiday programme.



The **Inspire to Achieve** and **Inspire to Work** programmes are highly effective in supporting young people to overcome barriers to either remain in or enter education, training or employment. 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 throughout the lifetime of the programmes and again this year, maintaining the lowest numbers recorded not entering education, employment or training (1.6% verified, 9 young people).



Plans are now ongoing to Implement the closure of the Inspire 2 Achieve project and Inspire 2 Work programmes, and prepare for the new Shared Prosperity Fund People and Skills programmes.





Enhancing the performance culture for Education and Leisure that delivers better educational outcomes and improved value for money.

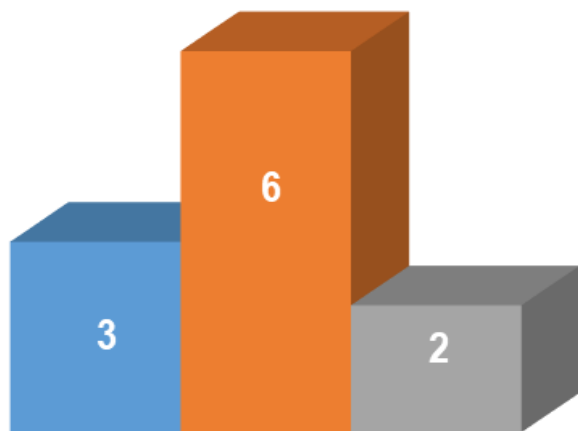


The Council's Corporate Risk Register includes one corporate risk with a specific link to the Education Directorate and this is relating to schools in an Estyn category.

The Education Directorate Risk Register has 11 risks, with 3 having a high residual status.....

EDUCATION DIRECTORATE RISKS

■ High risk ■ Medium risk ■ Low risk



- Failure to minimise the risks associated with pupil regression linked to COVID-19 learning disruption and to maximise learner progression.
- Dependency on funding around ESF Inspire projects in youth service.
- Failure of schools to improve following the issue of a pre-warning and statutory warning notice.

Schools are now strategically contributing to a full systems approach and performance culture. Self-evaluation work is embedded as well as collaborative leadership arrangements which will continue through the Headteacher Working Groups (covering Self-Evaluation/ Curriculum/ALN Reforms).

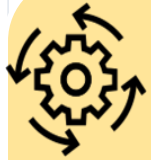
Schools were provided with a **8.4% uplift in budgets via the Individual School Budget** in 2022-23

The Member Development Programme is underway and new Members are engaging and providing very good feedback.

The Education Directorate Workforce Plan has been adopted for 2022-26 and is now in the implementation stages.



This Workforce Strategy aims to build on existing good practice and continuing to promote the Council as a good place to work – **developing a workforce that feels connected to and can meet the current and future needs of our community.**



Enhancing the performance culture for Education and Leisure that delivers better educational outcomes and improved value for money.

The management of school balances has been effective and budget considerations are discussed at the School Budget Forum.

2022/23 Portfolio is underspending in all areas except Transport



New and better processes have been put in place between Education & Finance to ensure improved monitoring of the budgets.

A favourable revenue **end of year** position was shown for 2021-22 and a break-even capital budget out-turn.



Education Directorate Budget April 2022—December 2022

Budget Area		Budget	Forecast	Variance	
		£	£	£	%
1	Individual Schools Budget	50,430,260	50,430,260	0	0.00
2	Education Improvement Grant	267,730	267,730	0	0.00
3	Other Costs:	725,420	736,864	-11,444	-1.58
	<i>School based Structural Maintenance</i>				
	<i>School Based Insurances</i>				
4	Supporting SEN - Schools:	1,730,430	1,690,970	39,460	2.28
	<i>SLA's with River Centre, SENCOM, Peny Cwm</i>				
	<i>Special Needs Equipment</i>				
	<i>Fees for Out of County Placements</i>				
	<i>Recoupment</i>				
5	Strategic Management:	2,264,410	2,265,330	-920	-0.04
	<i>School Based IT Costs</i>				
	<i>Premature Retirement/Redundancy Costs</i>				
	<i>Existing Early Retirement Costs</i>				
6	Assuring Access to Schools	2,439,820	3,048,299	-608,479	-24.94
	<i>Home to School Transport</i>				
	<i>Education Welfare Service</i>				
7	Facilitating School Improvement:	396,350	402,631	-6,281	-1.58
	<i>SNAP</i>				
	<i>SLA's with EAS</i>				
	<i>LA/School Additional Support</i>				
8	Supporting SEN - LEA:	380,730	297,567	83,163	21.84
	<i>Education Psychology Service</i>				
9	Further Education & Training	135,960	131,747	4,213	3.10
	<i>Home to College Transport</i>				
10	Youth Service	345,390	343,663	1,727	0.50
11	Other Expenditure:	143,850	117,233	26,617	18.50
	<i>Early Years</i>				
	<i>Contribution to Youth Offending Service</i>				
	<i>School Counselling</i>				
12	Education Departmental Budget:	195,970	87,734	108,236	55.23
	<i>Senior Management</i>				
	<i>Schools Transformation</i>				
	<i>Inclusion</i>				
13	Corporate Recharges:	4,671,690	4,671,689	1	0.00
	<i>School Based Capital Charges</i>				
	<i>LA Based IT Costs</i>				
	<i>LA Based Accomodation Costs</i>				
	<i>Staff Support Services</i>				
	Leisure:	4,176,620	4,179,846	-3,226	-0.08
	<i>Management Fee - Aneurin Leisure Trust & Corporate Recharges - Capital Charges, IT Costs, Premises Insurance, Staff Support</i>				
Grand Total		68,304,630	68,671,563	-366,933	-0.54



Enhancing the performance culture for Education and Leisure that delivers better educational outcomes and improved value for money.



£ £
£ £
£ £

The financial position is anticipated to be very difficult, as schools are still facing significant cost pressures in terms of **increasing utility costs, high inflation and pay awards.**

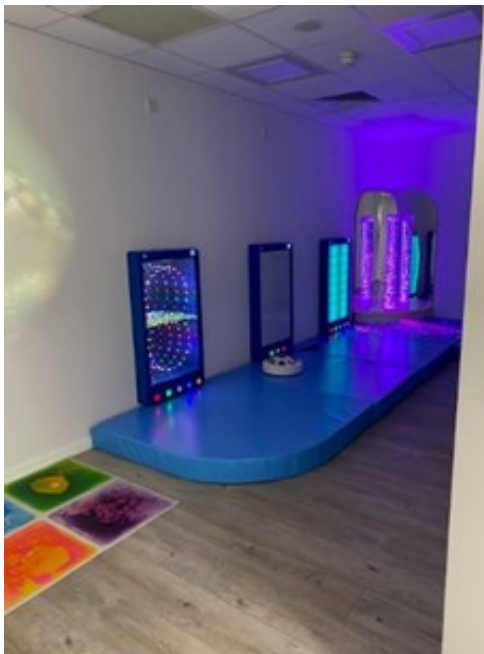
The 2023-24 revenue budget included an overall increase for Education of which:

- **Individual School Budget received an uplift of 4.2% (£2,02m) and awarded cost pressures totalling £0.115m**
- **Local Education Authority Budget received cost pressures totalling £0.923m mainly in relation to Home to School transport and ALN Reform**

Case Study - Sustainable communities for learning

The Blaenau Gwent Sustainable Communities for Learning (formerly 21st Century Schools) Band B Programme commenced in April 2019 and is set to conclude in 2025. The Programme will realise an investment of £19.6million throughout the Blaenau Gwent school estate. The Welsh Government intervention rate for Band B is a 65%/35% split, in favour of Local Authorities.

The remodelling works in relation to Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg commenced in the Summer term 2021 and were **completed during the Autumn term 2022**, there will be an official Ministerial opening of the provision in May 2023. The works involved the establishment of a sensory room and nurture provision, a STEM facility and radio rooms and the development of the outdoor provision including a sensory garden and outdoor play. This involved an **investment of £1m** in the school building.



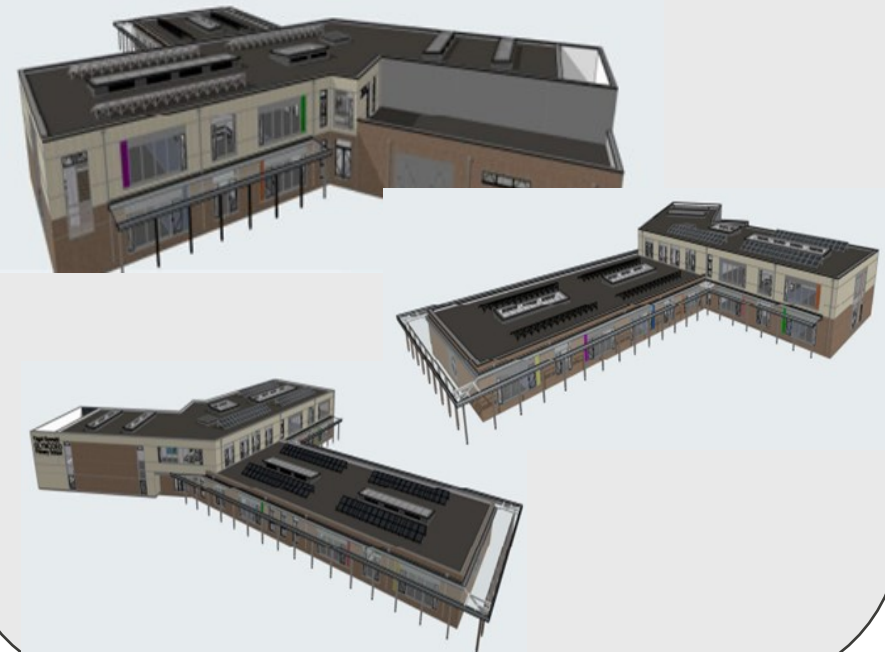
Sensory Room



Nurture Room

Glyncoed Primary New build

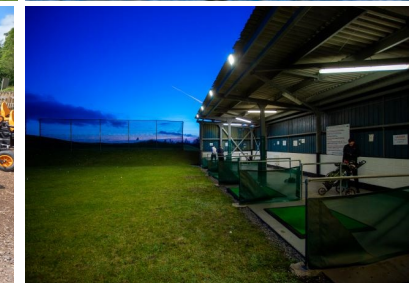
This project involves the replacement of the current Glyncoed Primary School with 360 place primary school including a separate childcare facility on a site adjacent to the current location. The contractor Morgan Syndall was appointed to deliver the project in October 2022 and work has commenced on site and is progressing well, the scheme will be completed for **occupation Spring 2024**



Case Study - Aneurin Leisure Trust

All areas of the business have seen year on year growth which has been in part attributed to the investments that have been made across Aneurin Leisure Trust over the last 2 years such as:

- Fully refurbished Sports Centres
- Improved golf products (mini golf & upgraded driving range)
- Additional activities at Parc Bryn Bach including: paddle boarding memberships, Go-karts, outside food kiosk, newly created sensory gardens (Parc Bryn Bach & Bedwellty House) and a newly created raised patio by lake side.



Alongside these investments ALT have been working in partnership with several Council departments to support various funded projects:

- Summer of Fun (supported by Sports Development, Libraries & park teams). Over 400 young people took part in the Youth Service's Summer of Fun programme and over 250 young people took part in the Winter of Wellbeing programme.
- Welsh Government reward and recognition funding for Social Services staff (supported through a voucher scheme, team building days and meeting space).
- Supporting the Ukrainian refugee crisis with a relaxation hub, English speaking courses and employment support in the Adult Education buildings and a voucher scheme set up to allow access to leisure to help integrate into the community.
- Assisted submission to the Rhaglen grant to support the Trinity Chapel project in Abertillery.
- Contributing to developments of the Shared Prosperity Fund - People and Skills plans, which will replace current ESF Adult Employability support.

Case Study - Schools in Blaenau Gwent are learning about 5G connectivity



The Education Directorate continue to work with partners, both internal and external in order to support our pupils development.



To enhance our school ICT delivery plans, schools in Blaenau Gwent are learning how 5G connectivity could transform the way we live and work with a new interactive Augmented Reality experience that is being delivered as part of the 5G Wales Unlocked programme, an innovation project co-funded by Welsh Government and various project partners.

Education and Regeneration teams worked with Welsh Government, Jam Creative Studios and Technocamps to create a way of educating the next generation about the benefits of 5G. The decision was to create an enrichment programme based around an Augmented Reality (AR) game – bringing to life the benefits that advanced connectivity can bring to towns like Ebbw Vale.

The content of the programme linked with the key aspects of the local industry whilst contributing to the relevant Areas of Learning, which firmly embeds it with what teachers are delivering already and enriches the learner's experience. We are also exploring the possibility of developing the format further by linking it with the 5G Immersive Environment; this gives a fully rounded experience to the next generation".

The AR game, developed by Jam Creative Studios and delivered in schools by Technocamps allows learners to work in teams to unlock 5G connectivity around a virtual 3D town by carrying out fun STEM activities.



Played by small groups on iPads, the activities span some of the many different sectors that 5G connectivity will transform; Healthcare, agriculture, manufacturing, recycling and transport and enables learners to see a clear change in infrastructure as they walk around and explore in detail the large 3D virtual town environment.

Aimed at learners in years 6 and 7, the experience will also help with their transition from primary to secondary education, as year 7 digital lead learners will be involved in working with the year 6 as they carry out their tasks.



Case Study - Councillors welcome changes for Additional Learning Needs

Councillors in Blaenau Gwent have supported two key strategies and associated policies aimed at improving the experiences and educational outcomes of children and young people with Additional Learning Needs (ALN).

The People Scrutiny Committee heard how the way pupils with Additional Learning Needs are supported has been reviewed in line with the Welsh Government's ALN Reform programme. All children and young people with ALN will be provided with tailored Individual Development Plans, which will set out the approach to support their needs and the additional learning provision required.

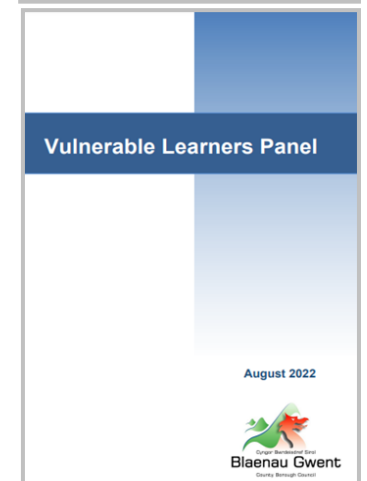
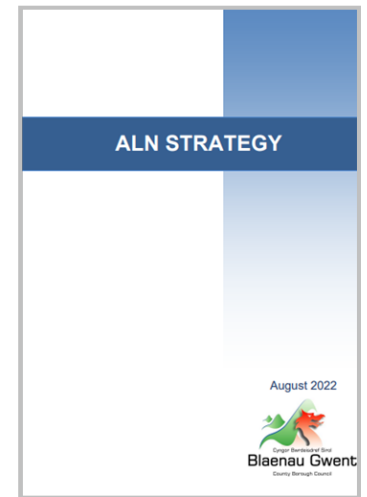
An ALN Reform working group, made up of Local Authority Education officers and Headteachers, have been meeting to work on the plans and to inform the new approaches – particularly the high-level ALN Strategy and the Inclusion Strategy.

The Council's Executive Member for People & Education, Cllr Sue Edmunds says:

“Supporting children and young people with Additional Learning Needs is fundamental to our vision for Better Schools, Better Citizens and Better Communities. It is vital that everyone is working together to ensure that these learners are well supported in both their education and wellbeing needs and are achieving their full potential and desired outcomes.

“I'm pleased that Scrutiny have today supported these changes to ALN provision which, in our view, can only be seen as an extremely positive step forward in the education and learning experiences of some of our most vulnerable learners in Blaenau Gwent.”

You can read the report to Scrutiny and view some of the new policies/strategies here - <http://democracy.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1248&MId=2540&LLL=0>



Case Study - Welsh In Education Strategic Plan & Welsh Medium Seedling Provision



The Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) 2022-2032 is a 10-year plan, Blaenau Gwent has an ambitious target of increasing the Year 1 cohort (750 pupils) taught via the medium of Welsh to 75 pupils -10% by 2032 (baseline as per plasc 2021 data 29 pupils - 4%).

As part of this plan the Blaenau Gwent will open a **210 place Welsh Medium Seedling Primary School** on the Chartist Way Site, in the Tredegar/Sirhowy Valley. The school will be developed via a seedling growth model from **September 2023**. The Council are currently in the process of letting the contract for the new build and it is anticipated that the contractor will be appointed Spring 2023. It is anticipated, the new school building will be completed for occupation by September 2024. The school will open initially in its temporary location of Bedwellty House, Tredegar for nursery and reception pupils, with a new year group being added each year. Initial governance arrangements will be under Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg with a view to reviewing this after an initial 2/3 year period. Education Transformation are currently working with the Welsh in Education Forum (WEF) and Rhag in order to promote the new provision.

In order to support the seedling provision and develop increased capacity across childcare and early years' settings, a further 2 Welsh medium childcare settings are being established – at the Glyncoed Primary new build site, and in the new Tredegar seedling school provision. Currently there are 2 well established childcare provisions located in Brynithel and at Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg.

Case Study - Equality in our education and learning

Equality is something that is at the heart of everything that we do as a local authority. Effective partnership working enables us to provide advice and guidance to support schools around equalities and provide information through school bulletins (equality, diversity & inclusion). We also work with schools and the Children's Grand Council in order to support children & young people to have a voice.

The first Children's Grand Council session of this academic year was the **first in person session for two years. 51 pupils attended** the session with nearly all primary schools participating, the outstanding two schools were delivered an online session at a later date to allow all pupils to take part. The session covered the following areas.....

Positive Body Image & Healthy Food Relationships

What do food adverts and images tell you about food?

Vitamins, minerals and iron?

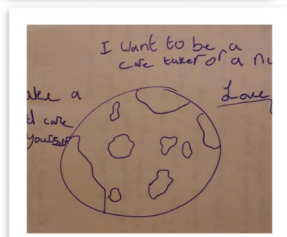


Well-being and Resilience

What does a good and safe community look like?

GOOD ☺
 Life is good!
 nobody will not understand
 Life is good!
 The first time you stood
 life is great!
 hopefully you relate
 Life is great!
 it's like a Saint.
 -Child A11

The children were asked to get creative, about what a good future would look like for them...



Children & Young Peoples own words...

What impact do you think these images could have on young people

That COVID changed the way people eat.

Adults tell you to eat healthy

lose trust in companies for lying ads

too much of this will make you overweight

make food loom yummy

That unhealthy foods are healthy

It could give them a balanced diet, because you have to eat mainly the good foods but a bit of bad is ok too.

They could eat more vegetables

Children might not understand the message

healthy food makes an impact on your body and fitness

encourage you to eat vegetables

That's your traffic light system

These images can change perspective of a young mind like stopping them eating at all.

Make it look good so more people go there

brings you happiness but you get diabetes

it's your traffic light system

Children may not want to eat food because of what it looks like

not everything means happiness

It makes young people want to buy unhealthy food

eating healthy could help you a lot

trick you

One thing they learnt today ...

26 respondents (57%) answered UNCRC for this question.

body image

Articles UNCRC

Express my feelings

Health & Safety

Wellbeing is important

Healthy Foods Health & Wellbeing good future

health

UNCRC

Wellbeing

Iron in our food

food

Making friends

Relationships with food

Mental health

Member Engagement -

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 or are scheduled as part of the Member Development Programme:

Induction Programme:

- The Work of the Individual Directorates – Education
- Corporate Parenting/Safeguarding Responsibilities

Member Development Programme

- Directorate Briefing Session for the People Scrutiny Committee
- Safeguarding Online Course - Mandatory for All Members
- Safeguarding in Education
- Education Transformation
- Youth Service
- Estyn Preparedness
- Working with the EAS
- Post 16 Learner Outcomes
- Aneurin Leisure Trust



People, Partnerships and Engagement

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

- Focus group sessions undertaken to understand what Children & Young People understand about wellbeing and mental health.
- Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence.
- 4 Children's Grand Council sessions were run over the last academic year.
- School councils continue to operate across school settings.
- 4 LGBTQ+ support groups available within schools to understand Children & Young People views, it's a place where they can meet discuss, express and offload if needed.
- Focus group carried out with Young Carers to understand the impact of the Young Carers passport.
- A democracy event took place where school from secondary came to understand the democracy journey and how they can be involved. 6 sessions took place throughout the day with 30-32 children attending each session.
- Schools receive weekly bulletins covering strategic and operational developments.
- Schools have received links to surveys for Children & Young People to have input into programme or policy development.
- Young people from Blaenau Gwent Youth Forum contribute to the scrutiny committee arrangements.
- Children & Young People from schools attend the Youth Forum which meets every month, there are 8 members of the forum and it focusses on working on priorities that matter to them as well as feeding into policy or consultations. Some of the Youth Forum have now started college, however, were part of the Blaenau Gwent Education System.
- Positive Body Image Campaign | Decide Me - Positive Body Image Campaign | Blaenau Gwent CBC (blaenau-gwent.gov.uk).
- Let's Go Zero https://youtube.com/watch?v=KKFGQ_q90CM&feature=share&si=EMSIkaIECMiOmarE6JChQQ Regional Mental Health Campaign Development.
- Youth Question time event 22-Gwent Youth Question Time 2022 | Blaenau Gwent CBC (blaenau-gwent.gov.uk).

Our Future Direction and areas that we feel we need to focus upon going forward

As stated at the beginning of this report our overall aim is to support delivery of our corporate objectives. Listed below are some of the areas we recognise that we need to continue to focus on improving, these areas include the actions identified from the recent Estyn Inspection. We recognise that even the achievements are not yet completed but remain areas for progress to be maintained and improved upon where possible.



As a council we are looking to '**Maximise learning and skills for all to create a prosperous, thriving, resilient Blaenau Gwent**'. Alongside the many achievements detailed throughout this report that have been delivered by the Education Directorate over this past year to support delivery of this corporate objective, we recognise that the following are areas that need further improvement:-

- Improve attendance rates in both Primary and Secondary sectors;
- Reduce school exclusions and support parents/carers who opt to Elective Home Educate (EHE). There are 3 schools with identified higher-levels of exclusions that will require targeted interventions;
- Continue to monitor and improve on attainment levels;
- Higher levels of language acquisition and reading across the board, but particularly in our very young children in early years; and
- Focus on improving the pace of change for Schools Causing Concern (SCC) improvement journeys.



As a council we are looking to '**Respond to the nature and climate crisis and enable connected communities**'. Alongside the many achievements detailed throughout this report we recognise that the following are areas that need further improvement:-

- Continue to effectively deliver sustainable communities for learning which are environmentally friendly;
- Further encourage nature friendly management on school grounds;
- Develop a schools Biodiversity policy and support with the integration; and
- Continue to engage all young people with the environment.



As a council we are looking to be '**An ambitious and innovative council delivering quality services at the right time and in the right place**'. Alongside the many achievements detailed throughout this report we recognise that the following are areas that need further improvement:-

- Further engagement and promotion to increase the 'on time' admission applications;
- Increase capacity at Pen-Y-Cwm and River Centre and reduce out of county placements, in turn reducing annual financial loss;
- ALN implementation review—act upon issues raised in questionnaire;
- Monitor Home to school transport funding issues;
- Secure external funding for European Social Fund (ESF) programmes e.g. Inspire;
- Ensure that our vision and strategic aims for education are fully understood by other officers, elected members, school staff and external partners;
- Develop a suitable vision and strategy for the future provision of ALN; and
- Improve the quality of self-evaluation, strategic planning and performance management.



As a council we are looking to '**Empower and support communities to be safe, independent and resilient**'. Alongside the many achievements detailed throughout this report that have been delivered by the Education Directorate over this past year to support delivery of this corporate objective, we recognise that the following are areas that need further improvement:-

- Monitor closely school place and sufficiency of all schools, use data more effectively to inform long term planning; and
- Continue to improve the reach of 11-25 year olds supported by Youth and increase the number that have gained qualifications.