



Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol  
**Blaenau Gwent**  
County Borough Council

# **EDUCATION DIRECTORATE SELF EVALUATION REPORT**

## **September 2021 (Education Directorate)**

**CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION: LYNN PHILLIPS**

**(Report for the Education Directorate)**



# Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Education Directorate

## Self-Evaluation Report (SER) for Local Government Education Services

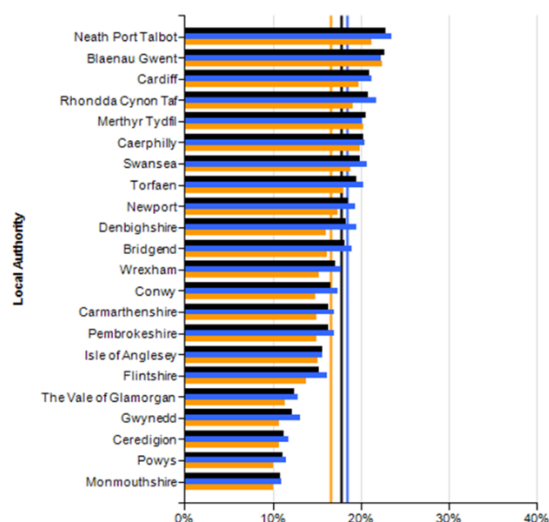
August 2021 update

### Contextual information

#### Context

The levels of pupils eligible for free school meals in Blaenau Gwent were almost 30% during 2010-16 and the highest of all LAs in Wales by a significant margin. The proportions declined during 2016-19 but BG remained the 2nd highest in Wales for all LA schools and highest for secondary schools during 2018-19. Although eFSM data hasn't been recently produced nationally, eFSM rates have increased across the County Borough in line with the impact of COVID-19 and given the evidential relationship between pupil performance and deprivation (using eFSM as a proxy indicator), pupil outcomes in BG would be expected to be among the lowest in Wales.

1.1 % pupils of statutory school age eligible for FSM 3-year average  
LA comparison - 2018/19



The 2019 Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) was published on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2019. It ranks small areas according to their relative deprivation levels, across 8 types of deprivation to produce an overall index. It orders areas from the most to least deprived. Scores are calculated for each type of deprivation and combined together in a weighted sum (education has the 4<sup>th</sup> highest weighting at 14%). This gives each Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) in Wales an overall score that allows them to be ranked. The 2019 (WIMD) recorded the following for Blaenau Gwent;

- **Almost 13% of LSOAs are in the most deprived 10% in Wales.**
- **Over 85% are in the top 50%- the highest proportion in the nation.**

The proportions of pupils on school action (SA) and with SEN statements were below the all-Wales means in 2018-19. This contrasts to the previous year when an above average of pupils at secondary level were categorised on school action plus (SAP) and the combined proportions of pupils on SAP and with SEN statements at secondary level was the highest in Wales. As in the previous year, the rate of pupils indicated as receiving education other than at school (EOTAS) was the lowest (<1%) in Wales during 2018-19 but the rate for those pupils electing for home education was much higher (>9 per 1000 pupils) – an increase of 3 from the previous year.

2.4% (86) primary school pupils and 1.1% (15) secondary school pupils were recorded as having English as an additional language (below being fluent) during 2018-19. Both figures were similar to the previous year and much lower than for Wales as a whole.

Secondary school attendance during 2018-19 was the same as in the previous year (92.9%). This was 0.9% below the all-Wales average.

Unauthorised absences in secondary schools during 2018-19 was 2.2%. This is a 0.4% increase compared to the previous year and 0.5% above the all-Wales average. **WG modelling for attendance vs eFSM during 2018-19 indicated that 3 of the 4 BG secondary schools had positive residuals i.e. had better than predicted attendance figures.**

**Overall, the 2019 WIMD figures and high eFSM eligibility reflect very high levels of deprivation within the authority.** They also indicate the significant challenge required to improve educational outcomes to levels within other similar (but less deprived) LAs and to consistently match the all-Wales averages. **However, 2018-19 performance figures show that Blaenau Gwent has achieved parity with the latter in a number of areas confirming the progress being made within its schools.**

**This socio-economic context is provided as a backdrop to the SER and is not in any way a means to justify low-performance levels, indeed the Education Directorate/Council and key partners are ambitious for Blaenau Gwent's learners and the SER is increasingly demonstrating performance that is above expected levels across a number of areas of the LGES framework.**

## Inspection Area 1 – Outcomes LM-M Lead

### 1.1 Standards and progress overall

#### N.B.

- **There has been a relaxation of reporting performance arrangements by Welsh Government. Therefore, the Education Directorate are unable to report on school performance data for 2020-21.** Categorisation has also been suspended, so any information presented in this report is to only be used for internal self-evaluation purposes. A comprehensive data set of 2018-19 school performance is included, as the last available published data.
- The Statistics Department of the Welsh Government issued the following statement in the statistical bulletin for National Test results published on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2018:  
*'Following consultation on publication of teacher assessment data and National Reading and Numeracy Test data, the **Statistical Release will no longer publish data at a local authority level.** Analysis of the progress measure by local authority was presented in the Statistical Release in previous years. This is no longer published as a result of this change.'* Consequently, the SER does not refer to comparative outcomes for LAs as in previous years. However, there is reference to outcomes and progress for Blaenau Gwent and for its constituent schools.
- The WG statistical bulletin SFR64/2018 included the following statement:  
*'The revised AoL were introduced on a statutory basis from September 2015. This means that the cohort of children that started Reception in September 2015 were the first children to be formally assessed against the revised outcomes at the end of the Foundation Phase in the summer of 2018. **Comparisons of Foundation Phase outcomes with previous years should, therefore, be avoided as they are not measured on a comparable basis.**'* The bulletin also confirmed that *'the decrease in the FPI between 2017 and 2018 is due to a change in policy and recalibration of the Foundation Phase outcomes.'*
- **All school and LA results should be viewed with due consideration of the fall in all of the main performance indicators at FP, KS2 and KS3 at national level in 2019.**

#### Foundation Phase

##### At LA level:

**LO5+ outcomes** fell for all performance indicators except LLCW in 2019 (the latter result only related to the single Welsh medium school in BG). The lowest fall was in PSD. These falls reflect those observed within Wales as a whole. Except for LLCW, the results were also below the 2019 national averages with the greatest difference for LLCE. While the Y2 cohorts were different in years 2017-19 and acknowledging the WG advice above, there is indication of a falling trend in LO5+ outcomes during the last 2 years.

**LO6+ outcomes** also fell for all performance indicators except LLCW in 2019. The pattern was similar to that at LO5+ but with smaller changes for each indicator. The pattern again reflects that observed within Wales as a whole. Except for LLCW, the results were also below the 2019 national averages with the greatest difference for PSD.

### **3-year performance trend:**

#### **At LO5+**

Except for Welsh, both BG and the national averages fell for all performance indicators during the last 2 years. However, the falls were greater for BG in 2019 and so increased the performance gap between the two.

#### **At LO6+**

With the exception of Welsh, both BG and national averages fell by a similar amount during the last 2 years and generally maintained the performance gap between the two.

#### **At school level:**

Just over one-half of schools had lower LO5+ results in 2019 than in the previous year. Except for PSD, a majority of schools also had lower LO5+ results than their 2019 targets (as in the previous year). The pattern for LO6+ outcomes is generally similar to those for LO5+. However, almost two-thirds of schools improved LLCE results in 2019 while a similar proportion of schools exceeded their targets in MD. This suggests target setting by teachers is more reliable at this level.

**In summary, the WG ‘health warnings’ regarding 2018 FP results strongly indicate that comparative BG outcomes (at both school and LA level) should be viewed with caution.** Given the changes predicted by the revised curriculum, revised assessment criteria and the decline in national results in 2019, the fall in school results (with the exception of Welsh) and at LA level might be expected. **However, the differences between BG and national figures are small and indicate that LA performance is generally good and particularly so when contextualised for deprivation factors.** School target setting procedures continue to be a concern with a majority of schools attaining lower than target results in 2019. If school results reflect the true ability levels of pupils, then (in these schools) targets have been set too high.

### **Key Stage 2**

#### **At LA level:**

**L4+ outcomes** fell for all the main performance indicators in 2019. The greatest fall was for Welsh (but based on the single Welsh medium primary school in the LA). Writing outcomes also fell noticeably in 2019. The differences were generally commensurate with the gains made in the previous year making 2019 outcomes similar to those of 2017. These falls reflect those observed within Wales as a whole. The results were also below the 2019 national averages with the greatest difference for Welsh and English.

**L5+ outcomes** also fell for all performance indicators except Welsh 2<sup>nd</sup> language in 2019. As for L4+, the greatest fall was in Welsh. The falls again reflect those observed within Wales as a whole. Except for Welsh 2<sup>nd</sup> language, outcomes were also below the 2019 national averages with again the greatest differences for Welsh 1<sup>st</sup> language and maths.

### **3-year performance trend:**

#### **At L4+**

Both BG and the national averages fell for all performance indicators in 2019. However, the falls were greater for BG in 2019 in the core subjects and so increased the performance gap between the two. Welsh and Welsh 2<sup>nd</sup> language outcomes fell to a greater extent in 2019 with the latter having a declining trend during the last 2 years.

#### **At L5+**

There was a similar pattern to that shown at L4+ for the main core subjects i.e. a decline in BG performance which was a little higher than that observed nationally.

**At school level:**

Just over one-half of schools had lower L4+ results in 2019 than in the previous year. However, a majority of schools had similar or higher L4+ results compared to their 2019 targets. Most schools had lower L5+ outcomes than in 2018 while about one-half of schools had L5+ results below their 2019 targets.

**In summary, BG performance declined in all L4+ and L5+ indicators in 2019. As previously indicated, these falls reflect those observed within Wales as a whole indicating that LA performance is generally good and particularly so when contextualised for deprivation factors.** However, the decline in BG outcomes was greater than for Wales as a whole resulting in widening performance gaps in 2019. A majority of schools had similar or higher results compared to their 2019 targets indicating a better correlation between the two than for the FP. Graphs showing the relationship between English & maths performance vs eFSM generally identified the same underperforming schools as in previous years and these continue to be of concern with regard to the quality of learning and pupil standards.

**FP-KS2 value-added performance (2015-19)****At LA level**

Using national data:

- FP-KS2 value-added progress in NC language fell to become a little negative and moved below the national figure.
- FP-KS2 value-added progress in NC maths fell a little but remained above the national figure.

Using aggregated pupil level data:

- FP-KS2 value-added progress in language & maths was a little higher than expected but declined a little in both areas with a falling trend for the last 2 years.
- FP-KS2 value-added progress in reading was better than expected and improved from the previous year. Progress in numeracy reasoning was also better than expected and similar to that for reading.

**At school level**

- All but 3 schools averaged 2+ NC levels progress in 2019 in both language & maths.
- Progress in reading was better than expected in about two-thirds of mainstream schools
- About one-half of schools improved progress in reading in 2019.
- Progress in numeracy reasoning was better than expected in a majority of schools.
- A minority of schools had inconsistencies between NC and national test progress scores.

**In summary, with the exception of NC language, value-added performance was good using either NC levels or national test scores as performance indicators.**

However, progress in NC language was a little lower than expected and below the national figures for 2015-19.

### **Key Stage 3**

#### **At LA level:**

##### **Core subjects & Welsh 2<sup>nd</sup> language.**

**L5+ outcomes fell for all the main performance indicators in 2019 and particularly for maths and science.** These falls reflect those observed within Wales as a whole. The results were well below the 2019 national averages with the greatest differences for English and maths. However, writing outcomes noticeably improved.

**L6+ outcomes** improved for English and Welsh 2<sup>nd</sup> language in 2019 but fell for maths and science. The greatest improvement was in Welsh 2<sup>nd</sup> language and the highest fall in science. These falls again reflect those observed within Wales as a whole. However, all results were well below the 2019 national averages with the greatest differences for Welsh 2<sup>nd</sup> language and science. Literacy outcomes (oracy, reading & writing) all improved in 2019 – particularly for writing.

##### **Welsh 1<sup>st</sup> language**

- KS3 learners attended YGG Gwynllyw in neighbouring LA. Figures relate to performance of just BG pupils at Gwynllyw and not to the whole-school.
- L5+, 6+ and 7+ outcomes all improved in 2019 with the former two outcomes higher than the all-Wales means. 90.5% of the 2019 BG cohort also attained the CSI compared to 86.2% doing so nationally.

#### **3-year performance trend:**

##### **At L5+**

Both BG and the national averages fell for all performance indicators in 2019. However, except for Welsh 2<sup>nd</sup> language, the falls were greater for BG and so increased the performance gap between the two.

##### **At L6+**

There was a similar pattern to that shown at L4+ for maths & science i.e. a decline in BG performance which was a little higher than that observed nationally. However, L6+ English results improved in BG with a consequent narrowing of the performance gap. Welsh 2<sup>nd</sup> language results also improved in 2019 but also did at the national level.

##### **Non-core subjects.**

**L5+ outcomes** fell in all non-core subjects in 2019 and particularly for art, history and geography. These falls reflect those observed within Wales as a whole. As in previous years, MFL results were by far the lowest (as was the case nationally). All results were lower than the 2019 national means and particularly so for MFL and history.

**L6+ outcomes** also fell in a majority of non-core subjects in 2019 and particularly in art, D&T and music. As in previous years, ICT results were the highest and MFL by far the lowest. However, there were modest improvements for MFL & PE. Changes in performance were generally greater than at L5+. All results were lower than the 2018 national means and particularly so for MFL and history.

#### **At school level:**

##### **Core subjects & Welsh 2<sup>nd</sup> language.**

There were only 5 areas of improvement for the main L5+ performance indicators in 2019. Two out of the four secondary schools had improved L5+ English outcomes. One of these also improved Welsh 2<sup>nd</sup> language outcomes while another attained higher science results. Three schools also improved their L5+ oracy & writing results. However, one school had lower results in each performance indicator. Three of the four schools improved L6+ outcomes in English but with falls in maths and science.

The remaining school's results were the opposite with higher results in maths and science but lower outcomes for English. Three schools also improved their L6+ reading & writing results. A majority of schools had results below their 2019 targets at both levels and so questions the accuracy and reliability of internal assessment and target-setting procedures.

#### **Non-core subjects.**

L5+ outcomes fell in all non-core subjects at three of the four schools and in a majority of these at the remaining secondary school.

**In summary, for core subjects & Welsh 2<sup>nd</sup> language, BG performance was adequate. Outcomes declined in all L5+ indicators in 2019 and in maths and science at L6+. However, L6+ outcomes improved for English and particularly for Welsh 2<sup>nd</sup> language.** As previously indicated, these falls reflect those observed within Wales as a whole but, as for KS2, the decline in BG outcomes were sometimes greater than for Wales as a whole resulting in widening performance gaps in 2019. All results except L5+ Welsh 2<sup>nd</sup> language were well below the national averages but this might be expected given the high level of deprivation factors within BG and their likely impact upon pupils' learning. At school level, there were some improved outcomes for core subjects but a majority of performance indicators declined with L5+ maths results falling in all 4 secondary schools. However, all but one school had improved L5+ oracy and writing results and all schools improved L6+ writing outcomes. There is a concern regarding assessment reliability at two of the four schools. Results also indicate target setting as generally unreliable in schools at KS3 (as in previous years).

**For non-core subjects**, performance fell in all at L5+ & in all but MFL and PE at L6+. As previously indicated, these falls generally reflect those observed within Wales as a whole. The differences between BG outcomes and national averages were generally large and particularly for MFL and at L6+.

#### **KS2-3 value-added performance (2016-19)**

##### **At LA level**

Using national data:

- KS2-3 value-added progress in NC English and in maths fell considerably and was well below the national figure in both subjects.

Using aggregated pupil level data:

- KS2-3 value-added progress in NC maths was barely adequate and was unsatisfactory in NC English.
- KS2-3 value-added progress in reading was better than expected and improved from the previous year.
- Progress in numeracy reasoning was also better than expected and twice that for reading.

##### **At school level**

- **3 of the 4 mainstream secondary schools maintained or improved progress for NC English** with 2 of the 4 schools having expected progress for this subject.
- 2 of the 4 schools maintained progress for NC maths and had expected progress for this subject.
- One specific school had the lowest progress in both NC English & maths.
- Progress in reading was better than expected in all centres.
- 3 of the 4 mainstream secondary schools maintained or improved progress for reading.
- Progress in numeracy reasoning was better than expected in 3 of the 4 mainstream schools.



- A significant proportion of pupils regressed more than 10 SAS points in both reading and numeracy reasoning. An inordinate number of these pupils were from one centre.
- Some schools had inconsistencies between NC and national test progress scores.

**In summary, 2016-19 value-added progress (as measured by NC levels) was barely adequate in maths and unsatisfactory in English. However, progress (as measured using national test results) was good in both reading and numeracy reasoning.** A majority of secondary schools had better than expected progress for these test results. However, a disproportionate number of pupils at one centre were indicated as regressing in both these skill areas. As for KS2, some schools had inconsistencies between NC assessments and national test progress scores and so questions the accuracy & reliability of teacher assessments within these centres.

**Key Stage 4 (narrative based on provisional SSSP data; however, for final KS4 information see page 13.**

**The following points should be noted with regard to the provisional KS4 results:**

- The Welsh Government have stated that attainment across Wales in 2018 was negatively impacted by a change in early entry patterns, a change in type of cohort and the type of exams taken. Consequently, direct comparison between 2017 & 18 results may be unreliable. The same may apply in 2019.
- The 2018 GCSE cohort was smaller than previous years by 4.2% with GCSE exam entries 8.9% lower than in 2017.
- A record number of learners in Year 10 sat GCSEs early in 2017 which resulted in a reduction in the number of exam entries by Year 11 learners in some subjects in 2018. A significant number of Year 11 learners achieved their GCSEs in Summer or November 2017 and have not re-sat examinations in 2018. The reported results indicated the best results for 16 year-olds in 2018, who attained GCSE outcomes in either Y10 or Y11.
- There were 15 new or reformed GCSEs in Wales in 2018 including 6 new GCSE Science qualifications.
- Entries significantly increased for all these new GCSEs in 2018, influenced by changes to school performance measures. Consequently, was difficult to make meaningful comparisons with previous years' results due to these changes. The same may apply in 2019.
- The only changes to the 2018 performance measures related to the inclusion of GCSE science only as part of the Capped Points 9 score, and GCSE science results only reported in the A\*-C science figures. In previous years, BTEC science results were included in these figures.
- The new National Measures were reported on for the first time in 2019 and so, with the exception of the *capped 9 points score*, there are no previous outcomes to compare with.

**At LA level:**

**N.B Y11 cohort numbers in both schools and in the LA as a whole have fallen during the last 2 years. The smaller numbers make statistical comparisons increasingly unreliable.**

- Of the indicators with previous available data, one-half improved in 2019.
- Capped 9 points score improved in 2019 and achieved the LA target.
- The proportion of learners gaining A\*/A grades improved in both English and Maths in 2019.
- The proportions of learners gaining L2+ and 5 A\*/A grades were below the LA targets.

- BG results for the new national measures were all lower than the national means. Most results were also lower than expected in relation to the LA's eFSM entitlement.
- However, the Welsh Bacc. result was higher than expected in relation to the LA's eFSM entitlement.
- Differences between actual and modelled outcomes for the five 2019 interim measures indicated BG had negative residuals for all indicators except for the Skills Challenge Certificate results. However, BG had higher than expected ranking in relation to eFSM except for numeracy & science. This was particularly so for the Skills Challenge Certificate result which ranked 7<sup>th</sup> out of the 22 Welsh LAs.
- The proportion of pupils achieving no qualifications doubled to 2.4% in 2019 and was over twice as high as the all-Wales average.

### **3-year performance trend:**

- For the main performance indicators where previous years' data is available, all improved during 2017-19 in spite of a modest fall in the proportion of pupils attaining L2+ and 5 A\*/A grades in 2019. In contrast, some of these indicators declined at national level during the same period.

### **Welsh 1<sup>st</sup> language**

- KS4 learners attended YGG Gwynllyw in neighbouring LA. Figures relate to performance of just BG pupils at Gwynllyw and not to the whole-school.
- The proportion attaining A\*-C grades increased in 2019 with an improving trend during the last 2 years. 17% of the 2019 BG cohort attained A\*/A grades in Welsh 1<sup>st</sup> language and 48% attained L2+ compared with 43.3% of those learners in BG-based English medium schools.

(Awaiting KS3-4 progress data).

### **Welsh 2<sup>nd</sup> language**

#### **Full-course results**

- The proportion of pupils attaining A\*/A grades fell in 2019 (as was the case nationally) and was about half the all-Wales average.
- The proportion of pupils attaining A\*-C grades also fell in 2019 (as was the case nationally) and was about 10% below the all-Wales average.
- The proportion of pupils attaining A\*-G grades fell a little in 2019 but was similar to the all-Wales average.

#### **Short-course results**

- The proportion of pupils attaining A\*/A grades increased in 2019 but was well below the all-Wales average.
- The proportion of pupils attaining A\*-C grades also increased in 2019 but remained below the all-Wales average.
- The proportion of pupils attaining A\*-G grades fell a little in 2019 but was similar to the all-Wales average.

**Overall**, the short-course results are no longer comparable with national figures due to the relatively low numbers entered across Wales as a whole. Full-course results fell for all grade indicators in 2019 (as was the case nationally) and were lower than the all-Wales figures for higher grade levels.

### **At school level:**

There was considerable variation in outcomes between BG schools in 2019:

- Of the indicators with previous available data, over one-half improved in 2019.
- 2 of the 4 mainstream schools improved in at least one-half of these performance indicators in 2019.
- Abertillery improved outcomes in all but one performance indicator in 2019.

- The proportion of learners gaining A\*/A grades in maths improved in every mainstream school in 2019 and in 3 out of 4 mainstream schools for A\*/A grades, English & capped 9 points scores.
- Ebbw Fawr and Tredegar performed best for the new National Measures in 2019.
- L2 maths & L2 maths (numeracy) outcomes fell in 3 out of the 4 mainstream schools in 2019.
- Learner outcomes for Tredegar fell in over one-half of (pre-existing) performance indicators in 2019

Provisional data using modelled estimates for 2019 (prepared by EAS) indicated that:

- Most of the residuals indicate 'expected' outcomes for BG schools with residual values close to zero.
- Better than expected outcomes are indicated at Tredegar for Capped 9 points and at Ebbw Fawr for WB skills challenge.

**In summary, BG outcomes improved in a number of important performance indicators in 2019-21. The improvement in the proportion of pupils attaining higher GCSE grades in English and maths is particularly encouraging and may allow pupils to pursue appropriately challenging post-16 courses and improve their life chances.** In addition, outcomes for pre-existing performance indicators (with available data) all improved during 2017-19 in spite of a modest fall in the proportion of pupils attaining L2+ and 5 A\*/A grades in 2019. In contrast, some of these indicators declined at national level during the same period. At school level, there were improvements for most schools and particularly so for Abertillery in 2019. The increase in the proportions of pupils attaining A\*/A grades in English & maths is particularly encouraging. However, the fall L2 maths / numeracy outcomes in most schools is a concern as is the decline in Tredegar's outcomes in 2019.

#### **KS3-4 value-added performance**

At **LA level**, there was a significant difference in progress between English language and maths in 2019 (as in previous years). Progress in English was much higher than for maths (and also higher in each individual school). Overall progress in 2019 was lower than in the previous year for both subjects with falling trends during the last 2 years. The maths results indicated that, on average, little progress was achieved during KS4. The average grade for both English and maths was a D. Progress was improved in each area when 'best of' results were included but the rate for English / literature remained more than twice that for maths / numeracy.

#### **At school level:**

**2017-19 KS3-4 value-added performance for English was barely adequate** with only one of the 4 schools (Tredegar) averaging better than 1 'NC level' progress during the key stage. Outcomes improved when literature outcomes were included with 3 of the 4 mainstream schools achieving more than 1 NC level progress. Average grades also improved when literature results were included with 3 of the 4 mainstream schools achieving an average C grade for this combination. Tredegar achieved the best progress in 2019 while Brynmawr and Ebbw Fawr benefited most by including literature outcomes.

Of the 507 pupils who remained in the school throughout KS4:

- Almost two-thirds progressed 1 or more 'NC levels' in English.
- About 28% progressed 2 or more 'NC levels' (compared to about one-half in 2017 and one-third in 2018).
- About 4% progressed 3 or more 'NC levels' (compared with about 10% in 2017 & 5% in 2018).
- Almost one-third failed to progress at least 1 'NC level' (about one-quarter in 2018).
- About 12% actually regressed one or more levels during KS4.

**2017-19 KS3-4 value-added performance for maths was unsatisfactory** with all schools averaging less than one-half 'NC level' progress during the key stage and with Brynmawr and the River centre having average regression during this period. Progress rates improved when numeracy outcomes were included but, even so, no school achieved expected progress for this period. None of the centres achieved an average C grade for maths but one (Ebbw Fawr) did so when numeracy results were included.

Of the 507 pupils who remained in the school throughout KS4:

- About 43% progressed 1 or more 'NC levels' in maths.
- About 13% progressed 2 or more 'NC levels' (compared to about one-quarter in 2017 and one-fifth in 2018).
- Less than 2% progressed 3 or more 'NC levels' (compared with about 5% in 2018).
- About one-half failed to progress at least 1 'NC level' (about one-third in 2018).
- Nearly one-third actually regressed one or more level during KS4.

**In summary,**

- KS3-4 value-added progress declined for both English and maths during 2017-19 compared with previous years.
- KS3-4 value-added progress for maths was much weaker than for English.
- Progress improved notably when literature and numeracy outcomes were included in value-added calculations but, even so, progress for maths / numeracy remained unsatisfactory.
- Too many pupils failed to progress (or even regressed) in English and particularly in maths in KS4 during 2017-19.
- KS3-4 value-added progress declined for both English and maths in nearly all schools during 2017-19 compared with previous years.
- KS3-4 value-added progress for maths was much weaker than for English in all mainstream schools.
- Progress improved notably when literature and numeracy outcomes were included in value-added calculations but, even so, progress for maths / numeracy remained unsatisfactory.
- On average, pupils at the River Centre regressed in both English and maths during 2017-19.
- On average, pupils at Abertillery and Brynmawr made no progress or regressed in maths during 2017-19.

**Performance against WG modelled estimates**

WG residuals have been calculated from a regression line produced by plotting (National Measure) performance outcomes against % eFSM for all Welsh secondary schools and then aggregated at LA level. A positive value indicates better than expected performance in relation to eFSM while a negative value indicates lower than expected performance. For BG in 2018-19:

- All of the residuals are negative except for the Welsh Skills Challenge result.
- The maths / numeracy and science residuals are weaker than for language / literacy.
- The capped 9 points score for BG is very close to the modelled figure. This is mainly attributable to BG pupils having better outcomes in their 6 'optional' subjects. For BG pupils, 35% of the capped 9 points were attributable to non-compulsory qualifications compared with just 27% in Wales as a whole.

### **'Thirds' outcomes**

For 2018-19, in each of the interim KS4 measures, the cohort for each school was divided into thirds based on attainment, showing the **average points score** for the upper third, middle third and lower third of the cohort. The proportions of learners in each national third was also been determined (and compared with family schools when data available). The figures for BG secondary schools indicated:

- 3 of the 4 schools have the highest proportion of pupils in the lower attainment third.
- Abertillery and Brynmawr have the highest proportion of pupils in the lower attainment third.
- All 4 schools have the lowest proportion of pupils in the higher attainment third.
- Abertillery and Brynmawr have the lowest proportions of pupils in the higher attainment third.

School outcomes were then compared against modelled outcomes for FSM eligibility levels and compared to averages for other schools in Wales. A positive value indicates better than expected performance in relation to eFSM while a negative value indicate lower than expected performance. The results for BG schools in 2018-19 were:

- About one-half of the residuals were positive.
- 3 of the 4 schools had relatively high positive residuals in the lower attainment third.
- 3 of the 4 schools had negative residuals in the higher attainment third (but all were relatively small).

The results reflect previous findings which indicated that the proportion of BG pupils attaining higher grades (and consequently point scores) was notable lower than the all-Wales average.

### **Summary of KS4 Performance in Blaenau Gwent – 2020-21 (For information only, not to be used for comparative purposes)**

#### **N.B. The information does not contain results relating to the River Centre or Pen-y-Cwm Special School**

- The performance detailed results from the Centre Determined Grade (CDGs) model developed by Welsh Government, has been provided directly from schools. (**N.B.** APS is Average Points Score)
- **One school** - Performance declined in all indicators when compared to the 19-20 Academic Year, except for Best Science, which saw improved performance of +0.2 points.
- **One School** - Performance improved in all indicators, except for Numeracy, which saw a decline of -3.0 points.
- **One school** - Performance improved in all indicators except for Capped 9 and the Skills Challenge which saw declines of -7 points and -0.5 points accordingly.

- **One school** - Performance improved in all indicators except for 5A\*-As and Best of Science which saw a slight decline of -0.2% and -0.2 points accordingly.
- While there is no longer a requirement to report on the L2 Including English/Welsh & Maths indicator, many schools calculate this as a legacy performance measure. Comparison with the 2019 results in this indicator (no results were collected in 2020), demonstrate that there has been significant improvement in performance - +8.9%, +15.9%, +5.1% and +4.7% at the four secondary settings.
- **Of the performance indicators detailed above, 20 of 31 (65%) demonstrated improved performance at KS4.**

### **Post-16 outcomes (provisional data)**

#### **A & AS level Outcomes**

With the exception of Welsh-medium pupils attending YGG Gwynllyw in a neighbouring LA, most post-16 BG learners attend Coleg Gwent and, in particular, the Learning Zone for post-16 education.

For learners attending the **Learning Zone** during 2019-20:

- Completion rates for vocational courses were lower than for academic ones.
- Attainment rates (where learners completed courses) were similar for vocational and academic courses.
- Success rates (where learner did not complete courses) were higher for academic courses.

For learners following A & AS level courses across **all Coleg Gwent campuses** during 2019-20:

- At **AS level**, the proportions of learners attaining A\*-C and A\*-E grades were a little higher than the all-Wales means. However, the proportion attaining A\*/A grades was noticeably lower than the national figure.
- Outcomes at **A level** were similar to those for AS level. The proportions of learners attaining A\*-C and A\*-E grades were a little higher than the all-Wales means. However, the proportion attaining A\*/A grades was noticeably lower than the national figure.

**N.B. The BG Learning Zone's provisional performance for 2020-21 will be updated during the Autumn term 2021, however, an initial view is that academic 'A' Level KS5 performance remains relatively strong overall as detailed below;**

- A Level Pass Rate 99.1% in 2020-21, which is on the Wales mean average.
- A\*-A grades 31% (29% previous year).
- A\*-C grades 82% (88% year previous).

#### **Learner Destinations (2019-20)**

The **2019-20** Careers Wales surveys for Blaenau Gwent indicated the following destinations for **Y11 learners**:

- Many BG learners (86%) remained in full time education during 2019-20 an increase of 1% from the previous year. The 2019 figure was about 3% lower than the national average.

- Most BG learners opting for full time education returned to college but a few (4%) stayed on at school. These either continued in Pen-y-Cwm SEN school or moved to other LA sixth form schools.
- No BG learners were recorded as continuing in part-time education during the last few years.
- A small proportion of pupils (approx. 4%) undertook WBT during the last 3 years – slightly higher than the Welsh average of 3%.
- A small proportion (approx. 3%) entered employment - again slightly higher than the national average of 2%.
- Number of Year 11 leavers (17 year olds) - 9 individuals (%) were NEET at the time of the 2019-20 survey – 2 less than in the previous year and a lower proportion than for Wales as a whole (1.7%). All individuals are known and where needed supported individually via the Youth Service as part of the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework in BG.
- A number of learners (13) failed to respond to the 2019-20 survey – a notable decrease from the previous year. However, this was in part due limited engagement at times due to the pandemic. Careers Wales shares all non-respondent data with the Youth Service, and all individuals are contacted through a visit, and where needed offer support or referral to another appropriate agency.
- Number of 18/19 year olds known to be NEET – No whole authority destination data for 2018 is currently available for years 12 & 13. Careers Wales only report on 18-year-old NEET figures for young people who are in sixth form. DWP and Statistical data provides information for 18 – 24 year olds. Therefore, as Blaenau Gwent has a tertiary model, the only data published by Careers Wales for 18 year olds in Blaenau Gwent specifically is for learners leaving Pen-y-Cwm, an SEN school. Therefore, a partnership approach is used to ensure that referrals are made between organisations when young people either 'wobble', leave provision or need support. Young people are identified through the NEET Practitioner Forum, a sub group of the Raising Aspirations Group, and support is provided. Data is shared between the college, training providers and the Local Authority.
- Work based Learning providers share their data annually and will be available later in the autumn 2020. Coleg Gwent provides more detailed information regarding learner outcomes during 2019-20 to offset the gap in the Careers Wales data.

#### **School Categorisation: 2016 to 2019:**

**NB: All schools are categorised on an annual basis in accordance with the National Model for Categorisation. The process has taken place at a regional level and historic national moderation has confirmed that the regional process is robust. However, there has been no school categorisation process undertaken since 2019.**

Due to national reporting arrangement Special Schools are not included in these figures. Special schools in Blaenau Gwent include Pen y Cwm (3-19), which is categorised as green and The River Centre (3-16) which is categorised as yellow.

**Blaenau Gwent has a strong position overall on school categorisation and a relatively small number of Schools (4) Causing Concern, with progress being identified in 3 of the SCC schools.**

The proportion of **primary schools** categorised as green (i.e. highly effective) has tripled during the last 3 years with 86% now categorised as either green or yellow (i.e. effective or highly effective schools). The number of amber schools (i.e. in need of improvement) and red schools (i.e. in need of urgent improvement) has fallen with just 2 amber and 1 red school in the last 3 years.

Of the 4 **secondary schools** within the authority, one was categorised as green during the last 3 years but 2 identified as red during the same period and 1 as yellow.

**Overall, the 2018 /19 data confirms that over the last 3 years schools have improved their categorisation profile; many (83%) of schools are now either green or yellow with only two schools in amber and two schools red. This is a significant improvement when compared to the profile in 2014 when only two schools were green. This demonstrates that schools and clusters continue to build their capacity to self-improve and are becoming more resilient.**

### **Historical School Categorisation**

- **3 primary schools** were categorised as green for 2016, 2017 and 2018 (Beaufort Hill, Deighton & Georgetown) **with 3 primary schools** categorised as green for 2017 and 2018 (All Saints, Glanhowy and St Mary's CIW)
- **2 primary schools** were promoted to green in 2018 (Blaen-y-Cwm and Cwm) and 1 primary school promoted from amber to yellow (St Illtyd's Primary School) and 1 demoted to amber (Brynbach) but none demoted to red. It is anticipated that both amber schools will improve their categorisation status later this year.
- At **secondary level**, Tredegar was categorised as green during the last 3 years and Abertillery red during the same period. Ebbw Fawr was promoted to amber in 2017 and to yellow in 2018, but Brynmawr remains categorised as red. Overall, half of the schools are in need of improvement with 1 of these schools demonstrating significant progress and it is anticipated that this school will move to amber in the next categorisation round.

### **School Categorisation January 2019**

Overall, National School Categorisation in January 2019 indicated further continued improvement when compared with the previous year in terms of the number of green and yellow schools:

- The number of Red schools remains the same **(2)**. Two schools remain categorised as Red (Abertillery Learning Community and Brynmawr Foundation School).
- 2 schools were categorised as Amber (one school Rhos-y-Fedwen Primary remained as Amber with Brynbach Primary School being categorised from yellow to amber due to the need to provide additional support. Overall this represented a reduction of 2 schools compared to the previous year.)
- **10** schools were categorised as yellow (Coed-y-Garn Primary, Glyncoed Primary, St Joseph's Primary, St Mary's RC Primary, Sofrydd Primary Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg, Ystruth Primary with a further 3 schools moving from Amber to Yellow, including River Centre, EFLC and St Illtyd's Primary)
- **11** schools were categorised as Green (All Saints RC Primary, Beaufort Hill Primary, Deighton Primary, Georgetown Primary, Glanhowy Primary, Pen-y-Cwm Special, St Mary's CIW Primary and Tredegar Comprehensive School with a further 3 schools moving from Yellow to Green Blaen-y-Cwm Primary, Cwm



Primary and Willowtown Primary). This is again an improvement on the previous year and over a three-year period represents a significant improvement in the percentage of schools categorised as either Yellow or Green and demonstrates the improved capacity and leadership within our schools.

### **School Categorisation January 2020**

Overall, National School Categorisation in January 2020 indicated further sustained improvement over the period.

- The number of Red schools remains the same **(2)**. Two schools remain categorised as Red (Abertillery Learning Community and Brynmawr Foundation School), as both schools are in an Estyn category.
- **2** schools were categorised as Amber (Glyncoed Primary School and Sofyrdd Primary School.)
- **10** schools were categorised as Yellow (Coed-y-Garn Primary, Ebbw Fawr Learning Community, St Illtyd's Primary, St Joseph's Primary, St Mary's RC Primary, Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg, River Centre with a further 2 schools moving from Amber to Yellow (Brynbach Primary and Rhos-y-Fedwen Primary) and one Deighton Primary School moving from Green to yellow)
- **11** schools were categorised as Green (All Saints RC Primary, Blaen-y-Cwm Primary, Beaufort Hill Primary, Cwm Primary, Georgetown Primary, Glanhwy Primary, Pen-y-Cwm Special, St Mary's CiW Primary, Willowtown Primary, Ystruth Primary and Tredegar Comprehensive School. This is again an improvement and represents a significant improvement in the percentage of schools categorised as either Yellow or Green and further demonstrates the improved capacity and leadership within our schools.

### **Schools Causing Concern**

**Sofrydd Primary School** was categorised as Amber in January 2020 as the school development plan was identified as unsatisfactory and became part of the regional schools causing concern arrangements. A review identified 12 key recommendations for securing improvement and now informs the work programme that is being progressed. Key to this improvement agenda has been the need to improve governance arrangements, which have continued to be strengthened through the successful recruitment of a new Chair of Governors and Vice Chair of Governors who has continued to work alongside the Acting Executive Headteacher, this relationship has continued to deliver satisfactory progress against the recommendations, however, there is a need for the school improvement service to verify judgements. At the start of the Summer term 2021 a new Acting Headteacher commenced in post.

### **Schools in Receipt of a Statutory Warning Notice**

#### **Abertillery Learning Community (Red)**

The school is currently subject to a LA warning notice to improve and a programme of intervention. However, it is important to note that for 2020 as a result of the pandemic there are no comparative performance measurements that can be relied upon. A school leadership review was undertaken in the Autumn term of 2017, which resulted in LA intervention and when the school was inspected in February 2018 it was then placed in the statutory category of requiring significant improvement. A follow-up visit was held in July 2019 and Inspectors noted the progress that had been made in respect of many of the recommendations for action from the

inspection, although noted that many of the improvements are at an early stage of development and as such confirmed that the school will remain within an Estyn category. Following a successful period of leadership continuity by two established Headteachers, the Governing Body successfully recruited a suitably experienced Headteacher to the permanent position of Headteacher and also appointed a new Chair of Governors. Both have been in place now for in excess of 2 years. The ALC revenue budget provisional out-turn is a significantly improved position with a deficit circa £324,000 against the projected deficit of over £1m+.

The Headteacher presented reports in each of the SCC meetings. In the October 2020, December 2020, February 2021 and March 2021 SCC meetings, the Headteacher reported on actions taken against each of the recommendations in the current term, with limitations on making school judgements due to the circumstances of the pandemic. It was acknowledged, however, by the SCC Panel that satisfactory progress is being made, based on the evidence seen and presented and that the Learning Community is in a more stable position, especially from a governance perspective. A broad range of actions were taken in all priority areas and each were reported on in detail in the meetings, including outlining the provision developed in distance and blended learning across the community, with a focus on both learning and wellbeing of pupils, staff and the wider school community. It is expected that Estyn will return to the school in the near future to undertake a monitoring visit.

#### **Brynmawr Foundation (Amber to Yellow and to Red)**

In December 2013 Brynmawr Foundation School was inspected by Estyn and placed in Estyn monitoring; with an adequate judgement for its current performance and prospects for improvement. The school was categorised as Amber in 2014 and 2015. The school was issued with a statutory Warning Notice in 2015 to improve standards, particularly in Maths. Support was put in place and Key Stage 4 outcomes improved significantly in 2016. The Warning Notice was subsequently lifted.

Due to the improvement secured, in 2016 the school was classified as Yellow, having made strong progress against Estyn's recommendations and with improved performance at the end of KS4. However, following an unexpected decline in KS4 performance in 2017, particularly in Maths and the outcome of an EAS review of the effectiveness of leadership and management at the school, the school was categorised as Red in the 2017-18 in the national school's categorisation process and invoked the LA powers of intervention. The school continues to be subject to a LA statutory warning notice to improve and after a period of support, intervention is now in place.

In the autumn term 2019, the school was inspected by Estyn and was placed in a category of Significant Measures. Since that time, governance has significantly improved. However, it is important to note that for 2020 as a result of the pandemic there are no comparative performance measurements that can be relied upon. The school's engagement in regional Professional Learning Opportunities and professional networks has been strong. The school has had several changes in senior leadership since the core inspection.

#### **River Centre (Amber to Yellow)**

In the Spring term of 2021, the Council acted promptly and issued a pre-warning letter to the Chair of Governors of the River Centre. The pre-warning notice clearly set out the Council's areas of concern, which were predicated around the school's pupil capacity and admission arrangements for learners. There are also other concerns that have emerged, such as the quality of the School Development Plan that will be covered through the SCC protocols. Following the issuing of the pre-warning notice a number of governors resigned from the governing body, which included both the Chair and Vice Chair of Governors. These vacancies have now been filled and a new Chair of Governors appointed as well as three strong LA Governors being appointed. The Council are considering the next steps in supporting the River Centre who are part of the Learning Network Schools partnership arrangements, in line with regional protocols.

## **2016 – 2019 School Inspections:**

NB: Estyn Inspections have been suspended since the start of the pandemic.

### **Standards**

For KQ1, a majority (67%) of centres were judged as good and none as unsatisfactory during 2016-19. No judgements were awarded in the inspection of the non-maintained settings as the cohort was too small to be representative

### **Wellbeing**

For KQ2, many (83%) centres were judged as good and none as unsatisfactory during 2016-19.

### **Teaching and Learning experience**

For KQ 3, many (75%) educational establishments were judged as good and none as unsatisfactory during 2016-19.

### **Care support and Guidance**

For KQ 4 many (75%) of educational establishments were judged as good with 1 school judged as Excellent and none as unsatisfactory during 2016-19.

### **Leadership and Management**

For KQ 5 many (75%) educational establishments were judged as good with 1 establishment judged as Unsatisfactory.

During the period excellent practice was identified at Blaen-y-Cwm against KQ 4 (care support and guidance) and at Tredegar Comprehensive for the quality indicators of Wellbeing, Learning Environments and Partnership working and at Sofrydd for partnership working.

7 Estyn re inspection monitoring visits/activities took place during the period 2016-19 with a few remaining in a category (1 middle school (14%). This is an improvement on the same time last year where 2 establishments were subject to follow up activity.

**The proportion of educational establishments attaining good judgements has continued to increase during 2016-19 and the proportion receiving adequate or worse judgements has continued to decrease over the same period.** This generally reflects improved standards, teaching and leadership in Blaenau Gwent educational settings. The case study requested from Blaen-y-Cwm identified excellent practice further evidences the improving standard of outcome / provision.

**The school now subject to SI (ALC) continues to receive tailored bespoke support from the LA and EAS.** The most recent Estyn monitoring visit noted that progress has been made against some of the recommendations and a further revisit was anticipated in 2021, but this did not happen as a consequence of Estyn inspection formal visits being suspended. Progress through recommendations forms the core of the Improvement Plan that is in place and the LA appropriately discharges its statutory function for a school causing a concern through the use of powers of intervention through the statutory Schools Causing Concern framework. A forensic approach to progress through the Intervention Panel is taken which encompasses a Council wide support programme at all levels of the organisation to ensure

progress continues to be made at an appropriate pace. **The school in Special Measures (BFS) is now part of the WG initiative of Multi-Agency Support for Schools in Special Measures and a 'one plan' approach has been adopted.** This will replace the SCC arrangements for BFS.

#### **2019-20 Youth Service Outcomes:**

**The Youth Service data demonstrates the service is good, taking account of its statutory duties and meeting them effectively, providing a wide range of universal and targeted opportunities for young people aged 11-25.**

In 2019/20, 18% (2054 individual young people) of 11-25 year olds voluntarily registered with the Youth Service, a 1% increase since the previous year (increase of 44 young people), placing 10th across Wales and above the Welsh national average (15%), with an additional 15,089 anonymous contacts made with young people (not registered, 8000 more than previous year) through the 11-18 Counselling Service, increased Detached youth work and street based support. 17% places Blaenau Gwent 2nd best across the region (Caerphilly 17%, Monmouthshire 22%, Newport 4% and Torfaen 13%) and 4th across the family mean (Caerphilly 17%, Merthyr 29%, Neath Port Talbot 28% and RCT 26%), same ranking as the previous year.

Out of the 2054 individuals, 41% (847 young people) gained 851 nationally recognised accreditations. The number of young people gaining a qualification significantly increased this year (16% increase), which was not expected as this is not the focus of the work, but is welcome. The outcomes for each programme are now measured on improved wellbeing as well as improvement in either attendance and behaviour, rather than accreditations. It is worth noting that achievements are made voluntarily and during the young people's spare time. However, 41% is the best performing across Wales and significantly higher than the Welsh national average of 10%.

#### **Numbers of individual young people gaining nationally recognised accreditations**

	Level achieved at 31 August							Total 2017-18
	Entry Level	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Duke of Edinburgh Award	Any other National Accreditation	Total 2018- 19	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
<b>Gender</b>								
Male	4	144	18	0	21	22	209	144
Female	95	255	210	1	15	62	638	157
Total	99	399	228	1	36	84	847	301

### Numbers of nationally recognised accreditations gained by young people

	Level achieved at 31 August							
	Entry Level	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Duke of Edinburgh Award	Any other National Accreditation	Total 2018-19	Total 2017-18
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
<b>Gender</b>								
Male	4	144	18	0	21	22	209	234
Female	99	255	210	1	15	62	642	222
Total	103	399	228	1	36	84	851	456

Out of the 847 young people gaining accreditations, 209 males gained 209 accreditations and 638 females gained 642 accreditations. This is a significant increase on last year's figures and reflects some of the work with the wellbeing groups established in the school year groups at the beginning of the school year.

Of those supported by the Youth Service, 79% (1704 young people) were aged 11-16 and 13% (350 young people) were aged 17-25 years old. This reflects the funding focus on school age young people and transition support for year 11 young people. These figures are recorded through the work with young people in the following projects: Inspire 2 Achieve, Inspire 2 Work, Health and Wellbeing, Duke of Edinburgh, Positive Futures, Young Ambassadors, the BYG Editorial Group, Youth Clubs and Young Reps Volunteering programme. The numbers of 17-25 year olds increased this year due to the support accessed and provided during the pandemic.

In addition, in 2018/19 the Youth Service recorded supporting young people *anonymously* (not registered) through the 11-18 Counselling Service, C Card, detached youth work, outreach and out of school activities and events. The Youth Service had 15089 anonymous contacts with young people (one contact is between 1-3 hours).

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

As a result of this co-ordinated approach with partners, there has been a steady reduction of numbers of young people becoming NEET, reaching 1.5% (9 young people) in 2019-20. This was a decrease of 2 young people from the previous year, and is in line with the lowest record to date. 1.5% is lower than the Welsh average of 1.7%, ranking BG as joint 10<sup>th</sup> with Swansea, 3<sup>rd</sup> across our family mean and 2<sup>nd</sup> across the region.

### Welsh Language in the Early Years in Blaenau Gwent

Cylch Meithrin Gwdihw (Brynithel) have recently extended their services to become an early year's education provider. The transition rate to Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg via Gwdihw has been low over the last few years, due in part to parental concern in relation to children accessing home to school transport at age 3. However, the aforementioned development has the potential to positively impact upon transition, as the children will be able to access their early year's education at Cylch Meithrin Gwdihw (Brynithel) in the short-term, prior to transitioning into Welsh-medium primary school.

As part of their national programme 'Set Up and Succeed' (SAS) programme, Mudiad Meithrin have established a Ti a Fi in Tredegar which is seeing growing numbers of families accessing this provision. They are also planning to open in new Cylch Meithrin in the Tredegar area in the autumn 2021. In addition, Buds to Blossoms in Beaufort are piloting Cylch Meithrin sessions (through the medium of Welsh) on a daily basis, with the support via Welsh Language programme Croesi'r Bont, which seeks to introduce Welsh language immersion and secure linguistic continuity via effective transition into Welsh-medium primary provision.

Mudiad Meithrin and Cymraeg y Blant have also established effective parent engagement programmes within Blaenau Gwent, details of which can be found in the table below:

	Number of Group Sessions	Number of Parents Attending	Session Details
<b>2018-2019</b>	65	332	In person - Welsh rhyme time & sign, baby massage and baby yoga (Ebbw Vale, Tredegar, Aberbeeg, Blaina)
<b>2019-2020</b>	124	750	In person - Welsh rhyme time & sign, baby massage and baby yoga (Ebbw Vale, Tredegar, Aberbeeg, Blaina)
<b>June 2020</b>	214	296	Via online engagement Me and my baby, Cuppa & Chat Cymraeg, Baby Massage, Welsh rhyme time & Sign

In line with the Welsh Government Childcare Grant, Welsh Medium Grant and Band B 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Projects, the Council plan to open 2 new Welsh-medium childcare settings in the autumn-term 2023, as follows:

- A full day care provision in the Ebbw Fawr Valley, which is programmed for development on the new build Glyncoed Primary School site.
- A full day care provision in the Tredegar/Sirhowy Valley, which will be co-located with the new Welsh Medium Seedling School on the Chartist Way site.

Numbers of pupils on roll, along with those applying for a place at Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg continues to increase, with a positive trend noted over the last 4 years in relation to both nursery and reception uptake. Transition rates in Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg via Helyg Buchan continue to be high, with between 60 and 70% of children progressing into Welsh-medium primary education. Work is ongoing to support a further increase via the Welsh Education Forum and associated promotion strategy.

**2019 Welsh Language Youth Service Outcomes.** The Youth Service works in partnership with the Urdd to provide welsh language opportunities to young people. Over the last year, 80 young people accessed support and activities through the medium of welsh. A Welsh language youth worker (funded by the Youth Service, employed by the Urdd) delivered issue based workshops, accredited programmes and opportunities through the Urdd, through the medium of Welsh. Activity included:

1 x weekly after school transition club from year 6 welsh medium provision into year 7 welsh medium provision (20 young people)

2 x lunch time clubs within welsh medium secondary provision (Gwynllyw)

3 x weekly after school welsh clubs across secondary schools (30 young people)

Additionally, stronger links were developed with Coleg Gwent campus, Blaenau Gwent young people from the Welsh Language Youth Forum within Gwynllyw was supported to feed into Blaenau Gwent wider youth forum, 10 young people were provided with volunteering opportunities for young leaders at Urdd residential and Youth Service staff were given training in Welsh language and culture.

### 1.1 Standards and progress overall - Areas where good progress has been made:

**N.B. All school and LA results should be viewed with due consideration of the fall in all of the main performance indicators at FP, KS2 and KS3 at national level in 2019.**

#### Foundation Phase

Given the WG guidance that *comparisons of Foundation Phase outcomes with previous years should ..... be avoided as they are not measured on a comparable basis*, it would be unwise to interpret and compare 2018 & 19 results in relation to earlier years. However, good features identified from the 2019 results include:

- Almost two-thirds of schools improved LLCE results in 2019 while a similar proportion of schools exceeded their targets in MD.

#### Key Stage 2

- LA-level FP-KS2 value-added progress in NC maths was above the national figure.
- LA-level FP-KS2 value-added progress in language & maths was a little higher than expected in 2019.
- LA-level FP-KS2 value-added progress in reading & numeracy reasoning was better than expected and improved from the previous year.
- All but 3 schools averaged 2+ NC levels progress in 2019 in both language & maths.
- Progress in reading was better than expected in about two-thirds of mainstream schools & about one-half of schools improved progress in reading in 2019.
- Progress in numeracy reasoning was better than expected in a majority of schools.
- A majority of schools had similar or higher L4+ results compared to their 2019 targets.
- School categorisation and inspection outcomes have improved in recent years.

### **Key Stage 3**

- L5+ writing outcomes improved noticeably in 2019.
- L6+ outcomes improved for English and Welsh 2<sup>nd</sup> language during 2017-19 and particularly for 2019.
- LA-level literacy outcomes (oracy, reading & writing) all improved in 2019.
- At LA-level there were modest improvements for MFL & PE in 2019
- Two out of the four schools had improved L5+ English outcomes & three schools improved their L5+oracy & writing results.
- Three of the four schools improved L6+ outcomes in English & three schools improved their L6+ reading & writing results.
- LA-level KS2-3 value-added progress in reading was better than expected and improved from the previous year.
- LA-level progress in numeracy reasoning was also better than expected and twice that for reading.
- 3 of the 4 mainstream secondary schools maintained or improved progress for NC English
- Progress in reading was better than expected in in all centres while 3 of the 4 maintained or improved progress for reading.
- Progress in numeracy reasoning was better than expected in 3 of the 4 mainstream schools.

### **Key Stage 4**

- Of the indicators with previous available data, one-half improved in 2019.
- Capped 9 points score improved in 2019 and achieved the LA target.
- The proportion of learners gaining A\*/A grades improved in both English and maths in 2019.
- The LA-level Welsh Bacc result was higher than expected in relation to the LA's eFSM entitlement.
- BG had higher than expected ranking in relation to eFSM except for numeracy & science. This was particularly so for the Skills Challenge Certificate result which ranked 7<sup>th</sup> out of the 22 Welsh LAs.
- The proportion of learners attaining A\*-C grades in Welsh 1<sup>st</sup> language increased in 2019 with an improving trend during the last 2 years. 17% of the Welsh-medium cohort attained A\*/A grades in Welsh 1<sup>st</sup> language.
- 2 of the 4 mainstream schools improved in at least one-half of the pre-existing performance indicators in 2019.
- Abertillery improved outcomes in all but one performance indicator in 2019.
- The proportion of learners gaining A\*/A grades in maths improved in every mainstream school in 2019 and in 3 out of 4 mainstream schools for A\*/A grades in English & capped 9 points scores.
- Most residuals indicate 'expected' outcomes for BG schools.
- There were better than expected outcomes at Tredegar for Capped 9 points and at Ebbw Fawr for WB skills challenge.
- For WG modelled estimates, the capped 9 points score for BG is very close to the modelled figure.
- For WG modelled estimates for 'thirds' outcomes, about one-half of the residuals were positive and 3 of the 4 schools had relatively high positive residuals in the lower attainment third.

### **Post-16**

- At AS level, the proportions of learners attaining A\*-C and A\*-E grades were a little higher than the all-Wales means in 2019.



- At A level, the proportions of learners attaining A\*-C and A\*-E grades were higher than the all-Wales means in 2019.
- For vocational courses, attainment rates in 2019 were similar to or higher than in the previous year except for L3.
- Entry level learners were 100% successful.
- Coleg Gwent provided more detailed information regarding learner outcomes during 2018-19.
- Coleg Gwent now provides monthly updates on retention rates and specific learner withdrawals (initiated October 2019).

**Current Youth Service outcomes / achievements include:**

- In 2018/19, 2010 (17%) of 11-25 year olds were registered as Reach and supported by the Youth Service. This is higher than the all-Wales mean (16%).
- Out of the 2010 individuals, 301 (15%) gained 456 nationally recognised accreditations. The outcomes for each programme are now measured on improved wellbeing as well as improvement in either attendance and behaviour, rather than just accreditation.
- In addition, the Youth Service recorded 7298 anonymous contacts with young people during 2018-19 through the 11-18 Counselling Service, C Card, detached youth work, outreach and out of school activities and events. (1000 more than previous year)
- The Youth Service also facilitates the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (YEPF) through a strategic multi-agency partnership called the Raising Aspirations Group (RAG) and two practitioner forums: the NEET Practitioner Forum and the Vulnerable Learners Transition subgroup, which are operational multi-agency partnerships. The RAG oversees the YEP Framework, co-ordinates the Early Identification Tool and through the practitioner forums brokers support and the lead worker role, providing robust tracking and monitoring of young people from year 2 to year 11 and transition from year 11 to post 16 provision.
- Current data indicates 1.5% of BG learners being NEET. The all Wales figure has not yet been published.
- Coleg Gwent provides monthly data which indicate withdrawals from college courses
- Careers Wales provides monthly data against the 5 tiered system including all those in WBL for 16 – 18 year olds.

**1.1 Standards and Progress overall: Areas requiring improvement:**

- **N.B. All school and LA results should be viewed with due consideration of the fall in all of the main performance indicators at FP, KS2 and KS3 at national level in 2019.**
- **Foundation Phase**
- Given the WG guidance that *comparisons of Foundation Phase outcomes with previous years should ..... be avoided as they are not measured on a comparable basis*, it would be unwise to interpret and compare 2018 & 19 results in relation to earlier years. However, areas requiring improvement identified from the 2019 results include:
  - Except for LLCW, both BG and the national averages at LO5+ fell for all performance indicators during the last 2 years. However, the falls were greater for BG in 2019 and so increased the performance gap between the two.
  - LO6+ differences between BG and national means in 2019 were greatest for PSD.
  - A majority of schools attained lower than target results in 2019 indicating inaccuracy and unreliability within school target setting procedures.
  - **There is a need to develop value-added procedures for Reception Year to Y2 in order to determine the progress made by pupils within the Foundation Phase.**

- **Key Stage 2**

- L4+ & L5+ outcomes fell for all the main performance indicators in 2019. The differences were generally commensurate with the gains made in the previous year making 2019 outcomes similar to those of 2017. However, the falls in outcomes were generally greater for BG than for Wales in 2019 and so increased the performance gap between the two.
- Welsh and Welsh 2<sup>nd</sup> language outcomes fell to a greater extent in 2019 with the latter having a declining trend during the last 2 years.
- L4+ writing outcomes fell more noticeably in 2019.
- Underperforming schools (for NC assessments) in 2019 were identified as the same as in previous years and these continue to be of concern with regard to pupils' learning and standards achieved.
- FP-KS2 value-added progress in NC language fell to become a little negative and moved below the national figure.
- **A minority of schools had inconsistencies between NC and national test progress scores. This questions the accuracy and reliability of assessment procedures within these centres.**

- **Key Stage 3**

- L5+ outcomes fell for all the main performance indicators in 2019 and particularly for maths and science. These falls reflect those observed within Wales as a whole. However, the falls were greater for BG and so increased the performance gap between the two.
- L5+ outcomes fell in all non-core subjects in 2019 and particularly for art, history and geography. All results were lower than the 2019 national means and particularly so for MFL and history.
- There is a concern regarding assessment reliability at two of the four LA schools.
- A majority of schools had results below their 2019 targets at both L5+ & L6+. Results also indicate target setting as generally unreliable in schools at KS3 (as in previous years).
- LA-level KS2-3 value-added progress in NC English and in maths fell considerably in 2019 and was well below the national figure in both subjects. Progress in NC maths was barely adequate and was unsatisfactory in NC English.
- A significant proportion of pupils regressed more than 10 SAS points in both reading and numeracy reasoning during 2016-19. An inordinate number of these pupils were from one centre.
- Some schools had inconsistencies between NC and national test progress scores. This questions the accuracy and reliability of assessment procedures within these centres.

- **Key Stage 4**

- **N.B. the new National Measures were reported on for the first time in 2019 and so, with the exception of the *capped 9 points score*, there are no previous outcomes for these measures to compare with.**
- BG results for the new National measures were all lower than the national means. Most results were also lower than expected in relation to the LA's eFSM entitlement.
- The proportion of learners gaining L2+ and 5 A\*/A grades in 2019 was below the LA targets.
- L2 maths & L2 maths (numeracy) outcomes fell in 3 out of the 4 mainstream schools in 2019.

- Learner outcomes for Tredegar fell in over one-half of performance indicators in 2019.
- KS3-4 value-added progress declined for both English and maths during 2017-19 compared with previous years.
- KS3-4 value-added progress for maths was much weaker than for English.
- Too many pupils failed to progress (or even regressed) in English and particularly in maths in KS4 during 2017-19.
- KS3-4 value-added progress declined for both English and maths in nearly all schools during 2017-19 compared with previous years.
- KS3-4 value-added progress for maths was much weaker than for English in all mainstream schools.
- On average, pupils at Abertillery and Brynmawr made no progress or regressed in maths during 2017-19.
- For WG modelled estimates, all residuals were negative except for the Welsh Bacc Skills Challenge result.
- Welsh 2<sup>nd</sup> language full-course results fell for all grade indicators in 2019 (as was the case nationally) and were lower than the all-Wales figures for higher grade levels.
- The proportion of pupils achieving no qualifications doubled to 2.4% in 2019 and was over twice as high as the all-Wales average.
- **Post-16**
- The proportion of learners attaining higher level grades (A\*/A) at both A and AS level has increased in 2019, although is still below the Wales benchmark level so is an area for further improvement.
- There has been a small dip in vocational success rates in 2018-2019 and there is room for improvement at L2 courses, which is currently at 80% completion rate. Success rates across the board remain relatively strong.
- Embed process initiated in October 2019 where Coleg Gwent provides monthly updates on retention rates and specific learner withdrawals.

## 1.2 Standards and progress of specific groups

### Gender Differences 2019

#### Foundation Phase

- Girls' LO5+ outcomes were higher than for the boys in every performance indicator.
- LO5+ gender differences increased for LLCE and PSD in 2019 but fell for LLCW. Gender gaps for MD and the FPI were similar to the previous year.
- Except for LLCW, 2019 LO5+ gender differences were higher than the all-Wales means but only noticeably so for LLCE.
- Girls' LO6+ outcomes were higher than for the boys in every performance indicator except MD.
- LO6+ gender differences were all lower than in the previous year. This was attributable to some improvement in boys' outcomes but mainly to lower girls' results.
- All LO6+ gender differences were lower than the all-Wales means and particularly so for LLCE.

#### Key Stage 2

- Girls' L4+ outcomes were higher than for the boys in every performance indicator and particularly in Welsh 2<sup>nd</sup> language.
- Except for Welsh 1<sup>st</sup> language, L4+ gender differences were generally similar to the previous year.
- L4+ gender differences varied between indicators but all were lower than the all-Wales means.

- Girls' L5+ outcomes were higher than for the boys in every performance indicator.
- Except for Welsh 1st language, L5+ gender differences were lower than in the previous year. This was mainly attributable to lower girls' outcomes in 2019.
- However, all L5+ gender differences were higher than the 2019 all-Wales means.

### **FP-KS2 Progress**

744 pupils remained in BG mainstream schools throughout KS2 during 2015-19 (726 with NT data) and are included in the following data. 52% were boys (about 5% higher than in the previous year).

- Girls had a higher mean NC level in both language & maths and particularly in language.
- **Progress scores for both boys & girls (as NC levels) were higher than expected i.e. greater than 2 NC levels progress during KS2.**
- **There was little difference in the mean NC progress scores between boys & girls indicating that, on average, boys had lower FP outcomes in 2015 but made similar NC progress to girls during KS2.**
- **Girls had a higher mean SAS in reading but lower in numeracy reasoning.**
- Mean progress scores in reading & numeracy reasoning varied but were as expected for boys & girls in both skill areas.
- **Boys made greater progress in both reading and numeracy reasoning within KS2.**

### **Key Stage 3**

#### **Core subjects & CSI**

- Girls' L5+ outcomes were higher than for the boys in each core subject and for the CSI.
- **L5+ gender differences were lower than for the previous year in each of the main performance indicators. This was mainly attributable to lower girls' outcomes in 2019.**
- L5+ gender differences varied. The difference was similar to all-Wales mean for science but higher than this for the other indicators and particularly in maths.
- **Girls' L6+ outcomes were higher than for the boys in every performance indicator and particularly for English.**
- L6+ gender differences were lower than for the previous year in all core subjects. This was mainly attributable to lower girls' outcomes for maths & science in 2019.
- **L6+ gender differences varied but were lower than the all-Wales means in each core subject.**

#### **Non-core subjects**

- Girls' L5+ outcomes were higher than for the boys in each non-core subject and particularly for art, MFL and Welsh 2<sup>nd</sup> language.
- L5+ gender differences varied but were higher than in the previous year for about one-half of subjects.
- L5+ gender differences were higher than the all-Wales means in a majority of subjects and particularly in art, ICT and MFL.
- Girls' L6+ outcomes were higher than for the boys in every subject except PE in 2019 and particularly for art and D&T (as in the previous year).
- L6+ gender differences varied but were lower than in the previous year for a majority of subjects
- L6+ gender differences were higher than the all-Wales means in a majority of subjects but lower for ICT, MFL and Welsh 2<sup>nd</sup> language.

### KS2-3 Progress

524 pupils remained in BG mainstream schools throughout KS3 during 2016-19 (505 with NT data) and are included in the following data. 50.4% were boys (similar to the previous year).

- Girls had a higher mean NC level in both English & maths.
- **Mean progress scores (as NC levels) were lower than expected except for girls' maths i.e. below 1.5 NC levels progress during KS3.**
- Boys' mean NC progress scores were lower than for the girls in both English & maths.
- **On average, boys made less NC progress than girls in both subjects during KS3 and so widened the gender gap.**
- Girls had a higher mean SAS in reading but lower in numeracy reasoning.
- **Mean progress scores in reading & numeracy reasoning were better than expected for both boys & girls.**
- **Girls made greater progress in reading but less progress in numeracy reasoning.**
- **On average, boys had considerably lower reading scores in 2016, made less progress than girls during KS3 and so widened the gender gap.**
- **On average, boys made greater progress in numeracy reasoning than girls during KS3 and reversed the gender gap.**

### Key Stage 4

- **Girls had higher outcomes in each of the reported main performance indicators in 2019 (and in previous years for pre-existing indicators).**
- Gender differences in BG were higher than the national means for most performance indicators in 2019.
- **Overall, there was little change in boys' outcomes in any of the pre-existing main performance indicators. Where the performance gaps between boys and girls narrowed, it was usually due to a fall in girls' outcomes rather than an improvement in those for boys.**

### KS3-4 Progress

For **English language**:

- Average progress rates for boys and girls were similar during 2017-19 years but a little below expected.
- The average progress made by boys was consistent during the last 3 years.
- **The average progress made by girls fell during the last 2 years and so contributed to a decline in the overall LA figures.**
- **Progress rates and average GCSE grades for both boys and girls improved when literature outcomes were included.**

For **maths**,

- Average progress rates for boys and girls were similar during 2017-19 years but well below expected.
- **Both boys' and girls' average progress rates fell during the last 2 years and so contributed to a decline in the overall LA figures.**
- Progress rates for both boys and girls improved when literature outcomes were included but not enough to improve average GCSE grades.

**Overall, the indicated progress rates for boys and girls in English language / literacy were just about adequate while those for maths / numeracy were unsatisfactory. The weak progress in maths was a main contributing factor to low school and LA performance at GCSE.**

## Performance and Progress of eFSM pupils 2019

### Foundation Phase

- eFSM pupils had lower outcomes than non-eFSM pupils in nearly all performance indicators in 2019 but the differences were lower than the national means. However, the differences generally increased during 2017-19.
- Given the WG advice that '*comparisons of Foundation Phase outcomes with previous years should ... be avoided as they are not measured on a comparable basis*', it would be unwise to attempt to determine any definite trend or pattern from the data or make conclusions based on these. However, eFSM outcomes still (proportionately) trail those of non-eFSM pupils in all FP main performance indicators and improving eFSM outcomes remains a priority for both schools and the LA.

### Key Stage 2

- eFSM pupils had lower outcomes than non-eFSM pupils in all performance indicators in 2019.
- **The differences were higher than the national means for most indicators and the differences increased during 2017-19.**

### FP-KS2 Progress

744 pupils remained in BG mainstream schools throughout KS2 during 2015-19 (726 with NT data) and are included in the following data. 21% were eFSM pupils.

- Non-eFSM pupils had a higher mean NC level than eFSM pupils in language & maths.
- **Mean progress scores (as NC levels) for eFSM & non eFSM pupils were similar to or higher than expected i.e. 2 NC levels progress during KS2.**
- **Mean progress scores (as NC levels) were only a little higher for non-eFSM pupils.**
- **On average, eFSM pupils had lower FP outcomes in 2015 and made a little less NC progress than non-eFSM pupils during KS2.**
- Non-eFSM pupils had a higher mean SAS in numeracy reasoning and particularly in reading.
- Mean progress scores varied but were lower and a little below expected for eFSM pupils in both reading & numeracy reasoning.
- **Non-eFSM pupils made greater progress in reading and in numeracy reasoning.**
- **On average, eFSM pupils had considerably lower reading & numeracy reasoning scores in 2015, made less progress than non-eFSM pupils during KS2 and so widened the performance gap.**

### Key Stage 3

- 2019 non-eFSM L5+ and L6+ outcomes were higher than for eFSM in each performance indicator.
- 2019 L5+ gender differences varied compared with those in the previous years. The gaps narrowed for English and the CSI, was similar for maths but widened for science. However, all differences were below the 2018 national means.
- 2019 L6+ differences were similar to or higher than in the previous year in each core subject. However, all differences were below the 2018 national means.

### KS2-3 Progress

524 pupils remained in BG mainstream schools throughout KS3 during 2016-19 (505 with NT data) and are included in the following data. 23% were eFSM pupils.

- Non-eFSM pupils had a higher mean NC level in both skill areas.
- **Mean progress scores (as NC levels) were lower than expected for eFSM & non-eFSM pupils i.e. 1.5 NC levels progress during KS3.**
- eFSM pupils' mean progress scores were a little lower than for non-eFSM pupils in both English & maths.

- **On average, non-eFSM pupils had lower KS2 outcomes in 2016 and made a little less progress than non-eFSM pupils during KS3.**
- Non-eFSM pupils had a higher mean SAS in both reading and numeracy reasoning.
- Mean progress scores **were better than expected for both eFSM and non-eFSM pupils.**
- Non-eFSM pupils made greater progress in reading but less progress in numeracy reasoning.
- **On average, eFSM pupils had considerably lower reading scores in 2016 and made less progress than non-eFSM pupils during KS3 and so widened the performance gap.**
- **On average, eFSM pupils had considerably lower numeracy reasoning scores in 2016 but made greater progress than non-eFSM pupils during KS3 and so narrowed the performance gap.**

#### **Key Stage 4**

- Differences between eFSM and non-eFSM outcomes for BG pupils in 2019 were lower than the national means in each reported main performance indicators i.e. the performance gaps were consistently smaller. This was the case in previous years for pre-existing indicators.
- **Given the high levels of deprivation and disadvantage within the authority, eFSM pupils achieved good outcomes for most KS4 performance indicators in 2019.**

#### **KS3-4 Progress**

##### **For English language:**

- Average progress rates for eFSM and non-eFSM pupils were similar during 2017-19 years but a little below expected.
- **The average progress made by eFSM pupils improved during the last 2 years.**
- **The average progress made by non-eFSM pupils fell during the last 2 years and so contributed to a decline in the overall LA figures.**
- **Progress rates and average GCSE grades for both boys and girls improved when literature outcomes were included.**

##### **For maths,**

- The average progress rate for eFSM pupils was higher than that for non-eFSM pupils during 2017-19 years but well below expected.
- **The average progress made by eFSM pupils improved during the last 2 years while that for non-eFSM pupils declined and so contributed to a decline in the overall LA figures.**
- Progress rates for both eFSM and non-eFSM pupils improved when numeracy outcomes were included but not enough to improve average GCSE grades.

**Overall, the indicated progress rates for eFSM and non-eFSM pupils in English language / literacy are just about adequate while those for maths / numeracy are unsatisfactory. Progress for eFSM pupils during 2017-19 was similar to or better than that for non-eFSM pupils. The weak progress in maths is a main contributing factor to low school and LA performance at GCSE.**

#### **Performance and Progress of More-Able Pupils 2019**

**N.B. BG results should be viewed with due consideration of a fall in all main performance indicators at FP & KS2 at national level in 2019.**

**In addition, the DoE have stated that ‘the decrease in the FPI between 2017 and 2018 is due to a change in policy and recalibration of the Foundation Phase outcomes.’ This statement is applicable to school, LA and national results and so lower FP performance for BG during 2018 & 19 was to be expected.**

#### At FP

- Except for LLCW (attributable to just one Welsh medium school in BG), LO6+ outcomes were lower than for Wales as a whole during the last 4 years
- Except for LLCW, the falls in BG and national averages were similar and so generally maintaining the performance gap between the two during the last 3 years.
- About 4% fewer BG pupils attained LO6+ in LLCE and about 3% fewer in MD compared to Wales in 2019.
- About 5% fewer Y2 pupils attained SAS >115 in reading and about 7% fewer in numeracy reasoning compared to Wales in 2019.

#### At KS2

- Both BG and the national averages fell for all performance indicators in 2019. However, except for Welsh (attributable to just one Welsh medium school in BG) & Welsh 2<sup>nd</sup> language, the falls were greater for BG and so increased the performance gap between the two.
- About 6% fewer BG pupils attained L5+ in English and about 7% fewer in maths compared to Wales in 2019.
- Only one BG pupil was recorded as attaining L6+ (in English) in 2019.
- About 4% fewer BG pupils attained SAS >115 in reading and about 7% fewer in numeracy reasoning compared to Wales in 2019.

#### FP-KS2 Progress

- **Mean progress in NC English and in NC maths was higher than expected for MAT pupils i.e. >2 NC levels during KS2.**
- **Mean progress in NC English and in NC maths was higher for MAT (L5+) pupils than for those attaining L4 or lower.**
- **Mean progress in reading and in numeracy reasoning was better than expected for MAT (SAS >115) pupils.**
- **Mean progress in reading and in numeracy reasoning was much higher for MAT (SAS >115) pupils than for those attaining lower SAS scores.**

#### At KS3

- L6+ outcomes in maths & particularly science fell during the last 3 years and decreased a little more than that observed nationally. However, L6+ English results improved in BG for 2019 with a consequent narrowing of the performance gap.
- Welsh 2<sup>nd</sup> language results also improved in 2019 but they also did at national level.
- About 10% fewer BG pupils attained L6+ in English and in maths compared to Wales in 2019.
- About 7% fewer BG pupils attained L7+ in English and about 12% fewer in maths compared to Wales in 2019.
- About 3% fewer BG pupils attained SAS >115 in reading and about 5% fewer in numeracy reasoning compared to Wales in 2019.

#### KS2-3 Progress

- **Mean progress in NC English and in NC maths was higher for MAT (L6 & L7+) pupils i.e. >1.5 NC levels.**
- **Mean progress in NC English and in NC maths was higher for MAT (L6 & L7+) pupils than for those attaining L5 or lower.**
- **Mean progress in reading and in numeracy reasoning was better than expected for MAT (SAS >115) pupils.**
- **Mean progress in reading and in numeracy reasoning was much higher for MAT (SAS >115) pupils than for those attaining lower SAS scores.**



**Overall, MAT pupils not only attain higher NC levels and national test scores, they also progress at a faster rate than those with lower outcomes at the previous key stage. This indicates that differences in outcomes between low and high attaining pupils increase as they progress through the key stages and that attainment at both FP and KS2 are significant determinants of future progress.**

#### **At KS4**

The proportion of pupils attaining 5 A\*/A grades fell by about 2% in 2019 and was well below the national mean (which fell by a similar amount in 2019 – see previous comments).

**Overall, except for a few indicators at KS3, higher level outcomes fell for in most indicators at each key stage in 2019 and the proportions of pupils attaining higher level outcomes / grades were consistently lower than the all-Wales averages. However, progress in both NC assessments and National test results was, on average, better or much better than expected at both KS2 & 3. The differences in these finding may be explained in that improvements at each key stage are essentially determined by pupil outcomes at the previous NC level. The generally low ability levels BG pupils on entry to schools and the relatively small proportions of pupils with higher ability levels has effectively determined higher level outcomes at subsequent key stages. Consequently, the LA needs to be a focus on raising standards within early years.**

#### **KS3-4 Progress**

For **English language:**

- **The average progress rate MAT pupils was much higher than for the Y11 cohort as a whole and well above expected progress.**
- **Adding literature outcomes improved the overall progress rate to a greater extent than for just MAT pupils**

For **Maths,**

- **The average progress rate MAT pupils was much higher than for the Y11 cohort as a whole and well above expected progress.**
- **Adding numeracy outcomes improved the overall progress rates of both MAT pupils and the whole cohort to similar extents.**

**Overall, MAT pupils made far more progress than the Y11 cohort as a whole in both English language / literacy and in maths / numeracy during 2017-19. Overall maths progress at KS4 has been consistently weak in Blaenau Gwent but this particular group of pupils has progressed at a much higher level and so contradicts this trend. This may suggest that the quality of teaching and learning in maths is better for MAT pupils and that other pupils might benefit from a revised deployment of more effective teachers.**

**The number of pupils achieving A\*/A grades was fairly evenly distributed across mainstream schools. Tredegar had most (13) and Brynmawr least (5).**

#### **In summary:**

The Mean NC progress in English and in maths from F Phase to end of KS 2 was higher for MAT (L5+) pupils than for those attaining L4 or lower i.e. 2.4 as opposed to 1.9

The Mean progress in NT reading and in numeracy reasoning from F Phase to end of KS 2 was much higher for MAT (SAS >115) pupils than for those attaining lower SAS scores

In KS3 L6+ English results improved in pupils BG for 2019 (against a national backdrop of decline) with a consequent narrowing of the performance gap.

The Mean progress in English and in maths between KS 2 and KS 3 was higher for MAT (L6 & L7+) pupils than for those attaining L5 or lower i.e. 1.7 and 1.8 as opposed to 0.9 for lower levels

The Mean progress between KS 2 and KS 3 in reading and in numeracy reasoning was much higher for MAT (SAS >115) pupils than for those attaining lower SAS scores

**Overall**, MAT pupils not only attain higher NC levels and national test scores, **they also progress at a faster rate than those with lower outcomes at the previous key stage**. This indicates that differences in outcomes between low and high attaining **pupils increase as they progress through the key stages** and that **attainment at both FP and KS2 are significant determinants of future progress**. The quality of support to ensure good progress is of reasonable quality and effectiveness, **however, the quality of support to improve early outcomes in the Foundation Phase needs to improve**.

Consequently, a key priority is to ensure that support is effective at maximising attainment in the Early Years and on **improving pupils' attainment at the earliest stage possible** i.e. within the FP or prior to this. Work with schools and the EAS is underway to start to address this but this remains a key area for improvement.

### **Performance and Progress of Pupils with SEN 2019**

#### **Foundation Phase**

There were 148 pupils with SEN recorded in the 2019 Y2 cohort (87 SA, 52 SA+ & 7 with SEN statements. This comprised about **one-fifth of the whole 2019 cohort**.

- About one-half of **pupils on SA** attained LO5+ in LLCE and MD with a higher proportion reaching this level in PSD. All results were lower than the 2018 national means.
- About one-third of **pupils on SA+** attained LO5+ in LLCE with just under one-half doing so in MD & PSD. All results were lower than the 2018 national means.
- Almost one-third of **statemented pupils** attained LO5+ in LLCE and MD but with a lower proportion reaching this level in PSD. The former results were higher than the 2018 national means but that for PSD a little below this figure.

**Overall, BG pupils on SA and SA+ had lower outcomes than their national peers (in 2018) whereas statemented pupils had better than average results in both LLCE and MD.**

#### **Key Stage 2**

744 pupils remained in BG mainstream schools throughout KS2 (726 with NT data) and are included in the following data. About 10% were on SA, 10% on SA+ and 3% statemented.

- The proportions of pupils attaining L4 or better in language fell for all SEN groups in 2019. All outcomes were below the 2018 national means.
- The proportions of pupils attaining L4 or better in maths also fell for all SEN groups in 2018 and were below the 2018 national means except for statemented pupil outcomes.
- All SEN groups had a lower mean NC level than non-SEN pupils in language and in maths. The means for SA and SA+ pupils were similar but it was lower for statemented pupils.  
All SEN groups had a lower mean SAS than non-SEN pupils in reading & numeracy reasoning. The means for SA & SA+ pupils were similar but higher for those with statements.

### **FP-KS2 Progress**

#### **NC progress**

- NC results for language and for maths indicate that, on average, SEN pupils had lower FP outcomes in 2015 and, except for SA pupils, made less progress than non-SEN pupils during KS2.

#### **National Test progress**

- NT results indicate that, on average, SA and SA+ pupils had considerably lower reading scores than non-SEN pupils in 2015 and made much less progress during KS2.
- The results also indicate that statemented pupils also had lower reading scores in 2015 but made, on average, very good progress during KS2.
- NT results indicate that, on average, SA pupils had considerably lower numeracy reasoning scores than non-SEN pupils in 2015 and regressed in this skill area during KS2.
- The results also indicate that statemented pupils also had lower reading scores in 2015 but made slight progress during KS2.

### **Key Stage 3**

523 pupils remained in BG mainstream schools throughout KS3 (505 with NT data) and are included in the following data. About 9% were on SA, 8% on SA+ and 5% statemented.

- The proportions of pupils attaining L5 or better in language in 2019 was similar to the previous year for SA and SAP pupils but increased for those with statements. Except for statemented pupils, the results were lower than the 2018 national means.
- The proportions of pupils attaining L5 or better in maths in 2019 varied. It was similar to the previous year for SA pupils, fell for SAP pupils but increased for statemented pupils. Except for statemented pupils, the results were lower than the 2018 national means.
- All SEN groups had a lower mean NC level than non-SEN pupils in English and in maths. SA pupils had the highest score and statemented pupils the lowest.
- All SEN groups had a lower mean SAS than non-SEN pupils in reading and in numeracy reasoning.
- The reading means for SA & SA+ pupils were similar but higher for those with statements. The numeracy reasoning means for SA & statemented pupils were similar but lower for SA+ pupils.

### **KS2-3 Progress**

#### **NC progress**

- NC results for **English & for maths** indicate that, on average, SEN pupils had lower KS2 outcomes in 2016 and made less progress than non-SEN pupils during **KS3 and particularly so for SA+ pupils in maths.**

#### **National Test Progress**

- The results indicate that, on average, SA and SA+ pupils had considerably lower reading scores in 2016 and made much less progress than non-SEN pupils during KS3.

- The results also indicate that statemented pupils also had lower reading scores in 2015 but made, on average, very good progress during KS3. The pattern is similar to that seen for reading during KS2.
- The results indicate that, on average, SA and SA+ pupils had lower scores in 2016 and made less progress than non-SEN pupils during KS2 and particularly so for SA+ pupils.
- The results also indicate that statemented pupils also had lower reading and numeracy reasoning scores in 2016 but made, on average, very good progress during KS3.

#### **Key Stage 4**

The proportions of pupils attaining A\*-G grades improved for all SEN categories in maths and in all except SA+ in English language in 2019.

**The proportions of pupils attaining A\*-C grades improved substantially for all SEN categories in both English language and maths in 2019. Overall SEN results were only a little below those for mainstream pupils.**

#### **KS3-4 progress**

There were 507 pupils in the 2017-19 cohort (28 / 5.5% on SA; 70; 13.8% on SA+; 34; 6.7% with SEN statements). Only those pupils with recorded outcomes at both KS3 and 4 were included in calculations.

#### **For English language:**

- The average progress rate for statemented pupils was similar to non-SEN pupils during 2017-19 years but lower for SA pupils. All were below expected values.
- The average progress rate for SA+ pupils was higher than for non-SEN pupils during 2017-19 and a little higher than expected.
- The average progress made by SA+ and statemented pupils improved compared to the previous year but was similar to this for SA pupils.
- Progress rates and average GCSE grades improved when literature outcomes were included.

#### **For Maths,**

- The average progress rate for SA pupils was similar to that for non-SEN pupils during 2017-19 years but well below expected.
- On average, both SA+ and statemented pupils made no progress in Maths during the KS3.
- However, all SEN groups improved their average progression rates compared to 2016-18
- Progress rates for all SEN groups improved noticeably when numeracy outcomes were included but not enough to improve average GCSE grades except for SA+ pupils.

Overall, the proportions of SEN pupils attaining A\*-C and A\*-G grades were relatively high, much improved compared to previous years and generally similar to those for non-SEN pupils. Progress rates for SEN pupils were also generally similar to non-SEN pupils. These were adequate in English / literature but unsatisfactory for maths / numeracy. The improved progress in both subject areas during 2017-19 is encouraging and particularly for the large group (70) of SA+ pupils in English and suggests that support for these pupils has been effective.

## Performance and Progress of Pupils at the River Centre School 2019

**N.B.** It is important to be aware that standardised tests only provide a snapshot of pupils' skills and that individual results can vary from day to day. In addition, the very small numbers of pupil results for the River Centre makes performance comparisons e.g. with BG mainstream pupils statistically invalid. Consequently, pupil results should be viewed at an individual pupil level and with due regard to any contextual factors likely to have impacted on outcomes.

### Key Stage 2

There was only 1 pupil in the Y6 cohort recorded as attending the River Centre (RC) during 2018-19. This pupil had no matched data for FP & KS2 outcomes.

### Key Stage 3

There were 11 River Centre pupils recorded with NC, national test results or both in the 2018-19 Y9 cohort. Matched national test data was only available for 6 of the 11 pupils. 4 pupils had SEN statements and 7 were on SA+. 3 were LAC and a majority were recorded with the Youth Offending Team.

- Only 2 pupils in the Y9 cohort attained L5 or better in English and in maths.
- The mean NC levels for RC pupils were much lower than those for the whole BG Y6 cohort in 2019.
- The mean national test scores in reading and numeracy reasoning were also much lower than for the mainstream cohort and with below average results for most pupils.

### NC progress

- About one-half of RC pupils progressed at least 1 NC level for English during KS3 but only 3 did so for maths.
- One pupil progressed 2 NC levels in English.
- The mean NC progress rates for RC pupils were much lower than for the whole BG cohort in both areas

### National Test progress

The progress rates for reading and numeracy reasoning were better than expected and higher than the BG means - particularly for reading. However, the small numbers of RC pupils undertaking the national tests and the varying contextual factors related to individual pupils makes comparisons statistically unreliable.

**Overall**, NC and national test scores were much lower than mainstream averages. NC progress rates were also lower than for mainstream pupils but progress in national test outcomes was better than expected.

### KS3-4 outcomes & progress

Of the 10 pupils who attended the River Centre throughout 2017-19:

- Just 1 pupil attained a B grade in English language but none gained a C grade or better in maths.
- The average grade in English language (E) was lower than that for the whole Y11 cohort (D). The average grade in maths (F) was also lower than that for the whole cohort (D).
- 5 pupils progressed 1 or more NC levels in English but only 3 did so in maths.

- 4 pupil regressed in English and in maths (one had very poor attendance).
- The mean progress rate for River Centre pupils in English and in maths was much lower than that of the whole BG cohort and indicated overall regression.
- Including literature had little impact on average progression but did improve the average GCSE grade.
- Including numeracy improved average progression considerably and also improved the average GCSE grade.

N.B. The very small numbers of pupils attending the River Centre and the varying contextual factors related to individual pupils makes comparisons with national outcomes statistically unsound.

**Overall**, River Centre pupils as expected had lower outcomes and average progress rates in English language / literature and in maths / numeracy compared to the whole Y11 cohort. There was a noticeable improvement to overall maths / numeracy outcomes when numeracy results were included but little change to language / literature outcomes when literature results were included. This suggests that support for numeracy was more effective than that for language.

### **Analysis of Outcomes & Value-added Performance for Resource Base Pupils 2019**

NC outcomes, national test and value-added performance of pupils attending resource bases at BG schools are considered in this report.

#### **Key Stage 2**

There were 9 pupils RB pupils recorded with NC, national test results or both in the 2019 Y6 cohort. Matched national test data was only available for 2 of the 9 pupils. 5 pupils had SEN statements, 3 were on SA+ and the remaining pupil on SA.

Only 1 pupil in the Y6 cohort attained L4 or better in English and just 2 did so in maths. The mean NC levels for RB pupils were about one-half that for the whole BG Y6 cohort in 2019. The mean national test scores in reading and numeracy reasoning were a little below the mainstream cohort (but comparing just 2 pupils' results).

All but 1 RB pupil progressed at least 1 NC level for language and all did so for maths during KS2. About one-half of pupils progressed 2 NC levels in both language in maths. However, the mean NC progress rates for RB pupils were lower than for the whole BG cohort in both areas. The progress rates for the 2 pupils with national test results were much higher than the BG mean for reading but similar to this for numeracy reasoning.

N.B. The very small numbers of RB pupils and the varying contextual factors related to individual pupils makes comparisons statistically unreliable.

#### **Key Stage 3**

There were 14 pupils RB pupils recorded with NC, national test results or both in the 2019 Y9 cohort. Matched national test data was only available for 10 of the 14 pupils.

6 pupils had SEN statements, 6 were on SA+ and 1 on SA.

Only 1 pupil in the Y9 cohort attained L5 or better in English and in maths. The mean NC levels for RB pupils were less than one-half that for the whole BG Y9 cohort in 2019. The mean national test scores in reading and numeracy reasoning were much lower than for the mainstream cohort and with below average results for most pupils.

**About one-half of RB pupils progressed at least 1 NC level for language and for maths during KS3.** One pupil progressed 3 NC levels in both languages in maths while 2 others progressed 2 NC levels in maths only. The mean NC progress rates for RB pupils were much lower than for the whole BG cohort in both areas with some pupils indicated as regressing during KS3. **The progress rates for reading and numeracy reasoning were generally as expected but lower than the BG means - particularly for reading.**

**N.B.** The small numbers of RB pupils and the varying contextual factors related to individual pupils makes comparisons statistically unreliable.

**Overall**, except for national test scores in Y6, NC and national test scores were much lower than mainstream averages. Progress rates were also lower than for mainstream pupils but the differences were greater at KS3 than at KS2 with some pupils indicated as regressing in NC assessments.

#### **Key Stage 4**

7 pupils attended the SNRB during 2017-19.

Of the 7 pupils in the cohort:

- 1 was eFSM.
- 1 was on SA+ and 6 statemented.
- None were low attenders.
  
- 5 pupils attained a C grade or better in English language but only 3 did so in maths.
- The average grade in English (C) was higher than that for the whole Y11 cohort (D). The average grade in maths was the same (D) as that for the whole cohort.
- 5 RB pupils progressed 1 or more NC levels in English language but only 2 did so in maths.
- 2 pupils failed to progress at all in English and maths while 3 pupils regressed in the latter.
- The mean progress rate for RB pupils in English language was higher than that of the whole BG cohort and better than expected. However, the mean progress rate for maths indicated no progression overall.
- Including literature and numeracy outcomes improved average progression but not average GCSE grades.

**N.B.** The very small numbers of RB pupils and the varying contextual factors related to individual pupils makes comparisons with national outcomes statistically unsound.

**Overall**, SNRB pupils had similar or better outcomes and average progress rates in English language / literature and in maths / numeracy compared to the whole Y11 cohort. This suggests that support for language and maths / numeracy development within the SNRB is generally effective for language at KS4 but, and for the main cohort, is less effective for maths/ numeracy.

## **Performance and Progress of Pupils in Ethnic Minority Groups & with EAL in 2019**

### **Key Stage 2**

There were 25 pupils from different EM groups in the 2019 Y6 cohort.

- All but 4 of the 25 EM pupils in the Y6 cohort attained L4 or better in English and all but 3 did so in maths.
- Over one-half of EM pupils attained L5 in both English and maths.
- All but one of the pupils not attaining L4 had SEN and some had additional contextual factors which may have impacted on their progress.
- **The mean NC levels for EM pupils were higher than for the whole BG Y6 cohort in 2019.**
- **The mean national test scores in both reading and numeracy reasoning were also higher for EM pupils.**

### **NC Progress**

- All but 4 EM pupils progressed at least 2 NC levels for language during KS2 and all but 2 did so in maths. All of these identified pupils had SEN and some had additional contextual factors which may have impacted on their progress.
- Over one-fifth of EM pupils progressed 3 NC levels in language and almost a third did so in maths.
- **The mean NC progress rates for EM pupils were higher than for the whole BG cohort in both areas**

### **National Test progress**

- The mean progress rates for reading and numeracy reasoning were much higher for EM pupils.

### **Key Stage 3**

There were 21 pupils from different EM groups in the 2019 Y9 cohort. Only 16 had matched KS2 & 3 NC results.

- **All but 2 of the 16 EM pupils with matched NC results attained L5 or better in English and maths in 2019. Both of these pupils had SEN and one had very poor attendance.**
- **Over two-thirds of EM pupils attained L6 or better in both subjects.**
- 2 pupils reached L7 in English and 5 did so in maths.
- **The mean NC levels for EM pupils were a little higher than for the whole BG Y6 cohort in 2019.**
- **The mean national test scores in reading and numeracy reasoning for EM pupils was similar to that for the whole BG cohort.**

### **NC progress**

- About one-third of EM pupils progressed 2 or more NC levels in English and maths during KS3
- Two pupils failed to progress at all and one regressed in English. However, 2 of these pupils had SEN categorised and one had very poor attendance.



### **National Test progress**

- The mean progress rate for EM pupils in reading **was a little higher than the whole BG cohort** but the mean progress rate for numeracy reasoning indicated on average progression

**Overall**, except for KS2-3 progress in maths, EM pupils had similar to or better outcomes and higher average progress rates than pupils in the 2019 mainstream cohort.

### **KS3-4 outcomes & progress**

Of the 17 EM pupils in the 2017-19 cohort:

- 10 pupils attained a C grade or better in English language but only 7 did so in maths.
- The average grade in English (C) was higher than that for the whole Y11 cohort (D). The average grade in maths was the same (D) but lower in terms of mean NC level.
- About two-thirds of EM pupils progressed 1 or more NC levels in English language but only about one-half did so in maths.
- 6 pupils failed to progress at all in English. However, all of these had EAL or SEN or both.
- 4 pupils failed to progress at all in maths while 5 actually regressed. However, all but one of these had EAL or SEN or both.
- The mean progress rate for EM pupils in English language was similar to that of the whole BG cohort but the mean progress rate for maths was lower and indicated on average regression.
- Including literature and numeracy outcomes improved average progression and particularly so in the latter,

N.B. The very small numbers of specific EM groups and the varying contextual factors related to individual pupils makes comparisons with national outcomes statistically unsound.

**Overall**, in KS4 EM pupils had similar outcomes and average progress rates to non-EM pupils in English language / literature but lower in maths / numeracy. This suggest that support for language development is generally effective at KS4 but that EM pupils may find more difficulty in transposing their language skills within a mathematical context.

## **Performance and Progress of Children Who Offend 2019**

### **Key Stage 2**

There were 3 YOs recorded with NC, national test results or both in the 2019 Y6 cohort. 1 pupil was on SA+ and one on SA.

- 1 pupil in the Y6 cohort attained L5 in English and Maths and another attained L4 in maths.
- The mean NC levels for YOs were lower than that for the whole BG Y6 cohort in language and in maths.
- The mean national test scores in reading and numeracy reasoning were well below the mainstream cohort (but comparing just 3 pupils' results).

### **NC progress**

- One YO progressed 3 NC levels in both language and maths during KS2.

- One progressed 2 NC levels in maths only and the remaining YO progressed just 1 NC level in both.
- The NC progress rates for individual YOs indicated expected or below expected progress.

### **National Test progress**

- The progress rates for national test results also varied between YOs.

### **Key Stage 3**

There were 12 pupils YOs recorded with NC, national test results or both in the 2019 Y9 cohort. Matched national test data was only available for 8 of the 12 pupils. 4 pupils had SEN statements, 4 were on SA+ and 1 on SA.

- 3 YOs in the Y9 cohort attained L5 or better in English and 6 did so in maths.
- The mean NC levels for YOs were lower than that for the whole BG Y9 cohort in 2019 and particularly so in English.
- The mean national test scores in reading and numeracy reasoning were also lower than for the mainstream cohort and with below average results for most pupils.

### **NC progress**

- About one-half of YOs progressed at least 1 NC level for language and for maths during KS3.
- One pupil progressed 2 NC levels in English while 2 did so in maths.
- About one-half failed to progress at all in English and in maths.
- The mean NC progress rates for YOs were much lower than for the whole BG cohort in both areas.

### **National Test progress**

- The mean progress rates for reading and numeracy reasoning were generally as expected but lower than the BG means - particularly for numeracy reasoning.

**Overall**, NC and national test scores of YOs were much lower than mainstream averages. Progress rates were also lower than for mainstream pupils. A significant proportion of YOs failed to progress in either NC English or NC maths during KS3.

### **KS3-4 outcomes & progress**

Of the 26 YOs in the 2017-19 cohort:

- 13 YOs attained a C grade or better in both English language and in maths.
- The average grade in English language (C) was higher than that for the whole Y11 cohort (D). The average grade in maths (D) was the same as that for the whole cohort.
- About two-thirds of YOs progressed 1 or more NC levels in English but only one-half did so in maths.
- About one-third failed to progress all in English while about one-half failed to do so or even regressed in maths. However, most of these pupils had SEN
- The mean progress rate for YOs in English was higher than that of the whole BG cohort and indicated expected regression.
- The mean progress rate for YOs in maths was a little higher than that of the whole BG cohort but indicated much lower than expected progression.
- Including literature improved average progression but not the average GCSE grade.
- Including numeracy improved average progression, a little but not the average GCSE grade.

N.B. The relatively small numbers of YOs attending KS4 and the varying contextual factors related to individual pupils makes comparisons with national outcomes statistically unsound.

**Overall, YOS had higher outcomes and average progress rates in English language / literature and in maths / numeracy compared to the whole Y11 cohort.** Outcomes improved a little when literature & numeracy results were included. The findings suggest that support for young offenders within BG has effectively allowed them to generally achieve the same outcomes as mainstream peers.

### **Performance and Progress of Children Looked After (CLA) 2019**

#### **Key Stage 2**

There were 8 CLA pupils in the 2019 Y6 cohort. 3 were on SA, one on SA+ and one statemented.

- All but 2 of the 8 CLA in the Y6 cohort attained L4 or better in English and in maths.
- LAC pupils attained L5 in English and one did so in maths. Of the 2 pupils not attaining L4, one had an SEN statement and the other was on SA+.
- The mean NC levels for CLA was similar to that of the whole BG Y6 cohort in language **but lower in maths.**
- **The mean national test scores in both reading and numeracy reasoning were noticeably lower for CLA.**

#### **NC progress**

- All but one CLA progressed at least 2 NC levels for language during KS2 and all but 2 did so in maths. All of the latter pupils had SEN.
- One CLA progressed 3 NC levels in language and almost a half did so in maths.
- The mean NC progress rates for CLA were similar to those for the whole BG cohort in both subject areas.

#### **National test progress**

- The progress rates for reading and numeracy reasoning were lower than expected and indicated some degree of regression, particularly in the former.

#### **Key Stage 3**

There were 14 CLA pupils in the 2019 Y9 cohort (only 12 had matched reading & numeracy reasoning results). 2 were on SA, four on SA+ and two statemented.

- 9 of the 14 CLA with matched NC results attained L5 or better in English and maths in 2019. Of the CLA who failed to attain this level, all had SEN and three had very poor attendance.
- One CLA attained L6 in English & maths and two attained L7 in maths.
- The mean NC levels for CLA were much lower than for the whole BG Y6 cohort in 2019.
- The mean national test scores in reading and numeracy reasoning were also lower for CLA than for the whole BG cohort – particularly for the former.

#### **NC progress**

- Most CLA progressed 1 or more NC levels in English and maths during KS3 with progress rates similar to that of the whole BG cohort.
- Two CLA failed to progress at all in English and 3 failed to do so in maths. All of these pupils had SEN and two had very poor attendance.

### **National Test progress**

The mean progress rates for CLA in reading and numeracy reasoning were notably higher than for the whole BG cohort.

**Overall, in KS2 and KS3 both NC and national test outcomes were, on average, lower for CLA than for other mainstream pupils.** This was more evident at KS3 than at KS2 for NC outcomes. NC progress for CLA was generally similar to the mainstream cohort in both English & maths. Progress rates in reading and numeracy reasoning were noticeably different for KS2 & 3. At KS2, both reading and numeracy reasoning progress rates indicated some regression but both were noticeably higher than for mainstream pupils at KS3.

### **KS3-4 Outcomes & Progress**

Of the 10 CLA in the 2017-19 cohort:

- 4 CLA attained a C grade or better in English language and the same number did so in maths.
- The average grade in English (C) was the same as that for the whole Y11 cohort. The average grade in maths (D) was also the same as that for the whole Y11 cohort.
- Over one-half progressed 1 or more NC levels in English language and in maths.
- 2 CLA failed to progress at all in English while a further 2 actually regressed. However, the former 2 were statemented.
- 3 CLA regressed in maths. However, all of these had EAL or SEN.
- The mean progress rate for CLA in English and in maths was similar to that of the whole BG cohort but below expected values - particularly for maths
- Including literature and numeracy outcomes improved average progression but not average GCSE grades.

N.B. The very small numbers of CLA in the cohort and the varying contextual factors related to individual pupils makes comparisons with national outcomes statistically unsound.

**Overall, in KS4 CLA had similar outcomes and average progress rates to mainstream the main cohort in English language / literature and in maths / numeracy. This suggest that CLA support for language and maths development is generally effective at KS4.**

### **Performance and Progress of Low Attenders 2019**

Low attenders are defined in the WG core data sets as those pupils '*absent for at least 20% of half-day sessions*'.

#### **Key Stage 3**

There were 13 low attenders recorded with NC, national test results or both in the 2019 Y9 cohort. Matched national test data was only available for 7 of the 13 pupils. 1 pupil had 1 SEN statement, 3 were on SA+ and 3 on SA. 3 pupils were LAC, 1 on EAL category B (Early Acquisition) and 2 were registered as young offenders.

- 4 pupils in the Y9 cohort attained L5 or better in English and 8 did so in maths.
- The mean NC levels for RB pupils were lower than those for the whole BG Y9 cohort in 2019.
- The mean national test scores in reading and numeracy reasoning were also much lower than for the mainstream cohort and with below average results for most pupils.

### **NC Progress**

- About one-third of low attenders progressed at least 1 NC level for language during KS3 while about two-thirds did so in maths.
- One pupil progressed 3 NC levels in language 5 in maths.
- The mean NC progress rates for low attenders were lower than for the whole BG cohort in both areas.

### **National Test progress**

- The progress rates for reading and numeracy reasoning were generally as expected but lower than the BG means.

### **KS3-4 outcomes & progress**

#### ***Of the 38 low attenders in the 2017-19 cohort:***

- About one-half of low attenders attained a C grade or better in both English language and in maths.
- The average grade in English language(C) was higher than that for the whole Y11 cohort (D). The average grade in maths (D) was the same as that for the whole Y11 cohort.
- Over two-thirds progressed 1 or more NC levels in English language – similar to the overall LA figure.
- About one-half progressed 1 or more NC levels in maths – higher than the overall LA figure.
- 3 low attenders failed to progress at all in English while a further 8 actually regressed.
- The mean progress rate for low attenders in English language and in maths was a little higher than that of the whole BG cohort but below expected values - particularly for maths
- Including literature and numeracy outcomes improved average progression and the average GCSE grade in maths.

**N.B.** The relatively small numbers of low attenders in the cohort and the varying contextual factors related to individual pupils makes comparisons with national outcomes statistically unsound.

**Overall, and in KS4, low attenders had similar or higher outcomes and average progress rates to the mainstream cohort in English language / literature and in maths / numeracy. This suggests that support in language and maths development for low attenders is generally effective at KS4 and / or a significant proportion of low attendance (of able pupils) was attributable to illness / injury rather than truancy.**

### **Performance and progress of Gypsy travellers**

In 2018/19 there were only 2 pupils in the Year 11 cohort and both completed statutory schooling and are going on to further education. Average attendance in 2018/19 was 81.24%, an increase of 1.75% compared to 2017/18 (79.5%).

In Foundation Phase, in 2018/2019 1 out of the 5 in the cohort (20%) achieved the FPI. This is compared to last year when 1 out of the 3 (33%) in the cohort achieved FPI.

In 2018/2019 one out of five pupils **(20%) achieved the outcome 5+ or above LLCE. 4/5 (80%) achieved outcome 5+ for their PSD.** All pupils achieved or exceeded their target in MDT, **1/5 (20%) got an outcome 5+ or above.** This is compared to last year's where in 2017/2018 (3/3) pupils (100%) achieved outcome 5+ for LCE, and 1/3 achieved their FPI, 3/3 achieved their PSD and 2/3 achieved their MDT (66%)

**In KS2, in 2018/2019 five out of five pupils (100%) achieved their CSI.** This compared to last year where four out of five pupils achieved the CSI. In 2018/2019, five out of five pupils achieved their L4 in all core subjects. Compared to 2017/2018 when four out of five pupils achieved L4 in all subjects.

**In KS3, in 2018/2019, two out of five pupils (20%) achieved their CSI.** This is compared to last year where one out of one pupils achieved their CSI. Two out of five achieved their level 5 or above in Maths, English and Science, where one 1/1 pupil achieved this last year.

There have been two exclusions in 18/19, compared to 9 exclusions in 2017/18.

In 2018/19 overall, 100% completed their required 200 sessions before going travelling. Attendance at FP was 80.8%, at KS2 81.2%, at KS3 78.5% and at KS4 82.9%.

**Overall, the quality of support provided for pupils in the Foundation Phase and KS3 is weaker than that provided in KS2 where all of the pupils achieved the CSI at L4+.**

## 1.2 Standards and Progress of Specific Groups: Areas where good progress has been made:

**N.B. All school and LA results should be viewed with due consideration of the fall in all of the main performance indicators at FP, KS2 and KS3 at national level in 2019.**

### Foundation Phase

Given the WG guidance that *comparisons of Foundation Phase outcomes with previous years should ..... be avoided as they are not measured on a comparable basis*, it would be unwise to interpret and compare 2018 results in relation to previous years. However, good features identified from the 2019 results include:

- All LO6+ gender differences were lower than the all-Wales means and particularly so for LLCE.
- Almost one-third of statemented pupils attained LO5+ in LLCE and MD. Both results were higher than the 2018 national means.

### Key Stage 2

- L4+gender differences were lower than the all-Wales means.
- Mean progress scores for boys & girls (as NC levels) were higher than expected during KS2.
- There was little difference in the mean NC progress scores between boys & girls.
- On average, boys had lower FP outcomes in 2015 but made similar NC progress to girls during KS2.
- Boys made greater progress in both reading and numeracy reasoning during 2015-19.
- Mean progress scores (as NC levels) for eFSM & non eFSM pupils were similar to or higher than expected.

- Over one-half of ethnic minority pupils attained L5 in both English and maths.
- The mean NC levels for ethnic minority pupils were higher than for the whole BG Y6 cohort in 2019.
- The mean national test scores in both reading and numeracy reasoning were also higher for ethnic minority pupils.
- The mean progress rates for reading and numeracy reasoning in 2019 were much higher for EM pupils.
- All but one LAC progressed at least 2 NC levels for language during KS2 and all but 2 did so in maths during 2019.
- The mean NC progress rates for LAC during 2015-19 were similar to those for the whole BG cohort in both subject areas.

### **Key Stage 3**

- L6+ gender differences were lower than the all-Wales means in each core subject.
- L6+ gender differences were lower than in the previous year for a majority of non-core subjects
- L6+ gender differences were lower than the national means for about one-half of non-core subjects.
- Mean progress scores in reading & numeracy reasoning were better than expected for both boys & girls.
- On average, boys made greater progress in numeracy reasoning than girls during KS3 and so reversed the gender gap.
- 2019 eFSM & non-eFSM differences were lower than the national averages at both L5+ and L6+.
- Mean progress scores in reading and numeracy reasoning were better than expected for eFSM pupils.
- eFSM pupils made greater progress than non-eFSM pupils during KS3 and so narrowed the performance gap.
- L6+ English results improved in BG for 2019 with a consequent narrowing of the performance gap compared when with national outcomes.
- Statemented pupils made, on average, very good progress in reading & numeracy reasoning at KS3 during 2016-19.
- All but 2 of the 16 ethnic minority pupils with matched NC results attained L5 or better in English and maths in 2019.
- Over two-thirds of EM pupils attained L6 or better in both subjects.
- 2 pupils reached L7 in English and 5 did so in maths.
- The mean progress rates for LAC in reading and numeracy reasoning during 2016-19 were notably higher than the whole BG cohort.

### **Key Stage 4**

- Differences between eFSM and non-eFSM outcomes for BG pupils in 2019 were lower than the national means in each reported main performance indicator.
- The proportion of learners gaining A\*/A grades improved in both English and maths in 2019.
- KS3-4 progress for eFSM pupils during 2017-19 was similar to or better than that for non-eFSM pupils.
- MAT pupils made far more progress than the Y11 cohort as a whole in both English language / literacy and in maths / numeracy during 2017-19.
- The proportions of SEN pupils attaining A\*-C and A\*-G grades in English language and in maths was relatively high, much improved compared to previous years and generally similar to those for non-SEN pupils.
- Progress rates for SEN pupils were also generally similar to non-SEN pupils and suggests that support for these pupils has been effective.
- Ethnic minority pupils had similar outcomes and average progress rates to non-EM pupils in English language. This suggest that support for language development is generally effective at KS4.

- Young offenders generally had higher outcomes and average progress rates in English language / literature and in maths / numeracy compared to the whole Y11 cohort. This suggests that support for young offenders within BG has effectively allowed them to generally achieve the same outcomes as mainstream peers.
- LAC had similar outcomes and average progress rates to mainstream the main cohort in English language / literature and in maths / numeracy. This suggests that LAC support for language and maths development is generally effective at KS4.
- Low attenders had similar or higher outcomes and average progress rates to the mainstream cohort in English language / literature and in maths / numeracy. This suggests that support in language and maths development for low attenders is generally effective at KS4 and / or a significant proportion of low attendance (of able pupils) was attributable to illness / injury rather than truancy.

## 1.2 Standards and Progress of Specific Groups: Areas Requiring Improvement:

**N.B. All school and LA results should be viewed with due consideration of the fall in all of the main performance indicators at FP, KS2 and KS3 at national level in 2019.**

### Foundation Phase:

- Boys' outcomes continue to be below those of girls in each main performance indicator. However, girls' higher level (LO6+) results have fallen noticeably more than for boys during the last 2 years.
- eFSM pupils had lower outcomes than non-eFSM pupils in nearly all performance indicators in 2019 and the differences generally increased during 2017-19.
- Except for LLCW (attributable to just one Welsh medium school in BG), LO6+ outcomes were lower than for Wales as a whole during the last 4 years.
- BG pupils on SA and SA+ had lower outcomes than those seen nationally (in 2018)

### Key Stage 2

- Boys' outcomes continue to be below those of girls in each main performance indicator. While L5+ gender gaps closed in 2019, this was due to girls' results falling more than for boys.
- eFSM pupils had lower outcomes than non-eFSM pupils in all performance indicators in 2019. The differences were higher than the national means for most indicators and increased during 2017-19.
- eFSM pupils made less progress than non-eFSM pupils during KS2.
- About 6% fewer BG pupils attained L5+ in English and about 7% fewer in maths compared to Wales in 2019.
- Only one BG pupil was recorded as attaining L6+ (in English) in 2019.
- About 4% fewer BG pupils attained SAS >115 in reading and about 7% fewer in numeracy reasoning compared to Wales in 2019.
- The proportions of pupils attaining L4 or better in language fell for all SEN groups in 2019. All outcomes were below the 2018 national means.
- SA and SA+ pupils had considerably lower reading scores than non-SEN pupils in 2015 and, on average, made much less progress during KS2.
- SA pupils had considerably lower numeracy reasoning scores than non-SEN pupils in 2015 and, on average, regressed in this skill area during KS2.



### Key Stage 3

- Boys' outcomes continue to be below those of girls in a majority of performance indicators. While L5+ & L6+ gender gaps closed in 2019, this was predominantly due to girls' results falling more than for boys.
- Boys' mean NC progress scores were lower than for the girls in both English & maths.
- Boys made less NC progress than girls in both subjects during KS3 and so widened the gender gap.
- eFSM pupils had lower outcomes than non-eFSM pupils in all performance indicators in 2019 (but the differences were lower than the national means).
- eFSM pupils made less progress than non-eFSM pupils during KS3 and so widened the performance gap.
- L6+ outcomes in maths & particularly science fell during the last 3 years and decreased a little more than that observed nationally
- About 10% fewer BG pupils attained L6+ in English and in maths compared to Wales in 2019.
- About 7% fewer BG pupils attained L7+ in English and about 12% fewer in maths compared to Wales in 2019.
- Except for statemented pupils, SEN results were lower than the 2018 national means.
- On average, SEN pupils made less NC progress than non-SEN pupils during KS3 and particularly so for SA+ pupils in maths.
- On average, SA and SA+ pupils made much less progress in reading and numeracy reasoning than non-SEN pupils during KS3.
- NC and national test scores of young offenders were much lower than mainstream averages. Progress rates were also lower than for mainstream pupils. A significant proportion of YOs failed to progress in either NC English or NC maths during KS3.
- Both NC and national test outcomes were, on average, lower for LAC than for other mainstream pupils

### Key Stage 4

- Boys' outcomes continue to be below those of girls in each main performance indicator. Where the performance gaps between boys and girls narrowed, it was usually due to a fall in girls' outcomes rather than an improvement in those for boys.
- The proportion of pupils attaining 5 A\*/A grades fell by about 2% in 2019 and was well below the national mean.
- KS3-4 progress rates for boys and girls in English language / literacy during 2017-19 were just about adequate while those for maths / numeracy were unsatisfactory. The weak progress in maths was a main contributing factor to low school and LA performance at GCSE.
- River Centre pupils had lower outcomes and average progress rates in English language / literature and in maths / numeracy compared to the whole Y11 cohort.
- EM pupils had lower outcomes and KS3-4 progression rates in maths / numeracy than in language. This suggest that support for language development is generally effective at KS4 but that EM pupils may find more difficulty in transposing their language skills within a mathematical context.

## 1.3 Wellbeing and attitudes to learning

### Pupil and Parent responses to Estyn Questionnaires regarding aspects of pupil wellbeing: for schools inspected during 2017-2019

Pupils' wellbeing and attitudes to learning are predominantly good in mainstream settings. This is evidenced by recent inspection reports. 16 primary schools, 3 secondary schools, one 5-16 school, 1 special school and 1 PRU have been inspected during the last 3 years. 14 primary schools were judged as good and 2 as adequate for this area. Of the 3 secondary schools, 1 was judged as excellent, 1 as adequate and 1 as unsatisfactory. The 3-16 school was also judged as adequate

although this was specific to behaviour in the secondary phase The special school was judged as good. With the exception of the 3-16 school (Abertillery LC), none of the above are currently subject to Estyn monitoring. This indicates that BG schools have responded swiftly and positively in improving this important area.

A review of pupil and parent responses to Estyn questionnaires was conducted during December 2017. This related to the most recent inspections at that time (14 primaries, 3 secondary, 1 special school and 1 PRU). The high proportion of positive responses given **by primary school pupils** was encouraging. This generally reflected a high level of wellbeing contributed to by effective provision and leadership. However, some issues were apparent and, in some cases, consistent across schools. Staff responses to bullying, effectiveness of homework and opportunities for exercise were indicated as requiring address in specific schools while pupil behaviour was an issue common to most schools. The need to improve pupil wellbeing was identified as a significant issue within the secondary phase of Ebbw Fawr LC. This has been addressed by the school and its actions recognised by ESTYN by noting it had made strong progress in this area and subsequently removed from follow up.

**Primary parents** also had very positive views of most aspects and, importantly, nearly all felt that their children were safe at school. However, some issues were evident in a minority of schools. These concerned weak transition arrangements, ineffective school reporting, insufficient support for SEN and a lack of extracurricular activities. Concerns about pupil behaviour were more common across the schools and reflected pupils' own views.

Responses given by **secondary pupils and parents** were of greater concern because of higher levels of disagreement recorded against the Estyn questions. At the time responses at Tredegar were much more positive than for Brynmawr and Ebbw Fawr and most concerns related to the latter two schools. Pupil wellbeing at EFLC was also identified by ESTYN as an area requiring significant improvement. However, a subsequent Estyn visit / report noted that strong progress had been made and the school is no longer subject to Estyn monitoring. Parents' responses generally reflected those of pupils for most questions and were much less positive than those at primary level particularly for Brynmawr and Ebbw Fawr schools. However, parental views have now greatly improved in both schools; two new HTs and new Chairs of Governors are in place as well as a significant number in each school of new staff. The Council has intervened in both these schools over the last two years and improvements have been secured. Concerns about 'transition', school reporting and extracurricular activities paralleled those of parents in primary schools notably in same two clusters as aforementioned which have now been addressed.

Three additional BG schools were inspected during 2018 and 2019. Detailed responses from pupils and parents are no longer included in inspection reports. However, the reports make reference to the contribution and impact of pupil and parent input e.g. at Blaen-Y-Cwm, staff provided an additional outside stage for role play and drama opportunities in key stage 2 as a response to pupil feedback and at St. Joseph's, *listening to learners* formed an important part of the school's self-evaluation process. However, at Abertillery LC, the use of pupils' views was underdeveloped in the secondary phase, there was too little regard for parents' feedback and the governing body had insufficient pupil representation. The school is currently addressing these concerns as part of their PIAP and monitoring progress.

### Healthy Schools Outcomes

The Healthy Schools and pre-schools programmes operating in BG are effective. All schools and pre-schools participate in these. School co-ordinator and pre-school officers ensure the effectiveness of implementation. The regional SEWC network providing support and a coordinated approach to the Healthy Schools agenda while good school to school support is taking place. An SRE group maps SRE provision against the 'What Matter' statements and the new curriculum in Wales in order to provide a toolkit for schools which operates from reception to KS4. This is a collaboration in Caerphilly LA. The partnership working between Pioneer school and regional Healthy Schools Group has been given exemplar recognition. Evidence shows that training has been effective and well received by schools and pre-schools.

The WNHSS and HSPSS are robust schemes, recognised by Welsh Government and provide a platform to ensure good health and wellbeing are at the core of school life. Significant progress has taken place during the last few years, currently:

- 6 schools are working towards NQA status.
- All 20 pre-school settings have achieved accreditation to the next phase.
- 5 additional schools have achieved Phase 5
- 3 additional schools have achieved phase 4
- Training has been carried out for a range of appropriate areas e.g. Relationships and sex Education, ACE awareness for pre-schools with all setting staff, cooking projects, emotional health & wellbeing and physical literacy.
- The development of a RSE toolkit has also encompassed a large element of work in preparation for the new Curriculum.
- The use of pupil voice as an integral part of progression when implementing actions within school, particularly around healthy eating and making necessary changes to attitudes.

All 4 secondary Schools completed the 2019 School Health Research Network survey, this will mean as well as schools having an individual report the LA will obtain a report also. This is expected to be publish at the beginning of April 2020.

Key findings will be disseminated to key partners across the Authority in order to discuss and address findings (where appropriate) collaboratively.

A working party with partners such as Aneurin Health, Aneurin Leisure and Police has been set up to support the schools with training and action planning.

Healthy Schools Co-ordinator continues to work closely with the Pioneering School Co-ordinator, who also attends the Gwent Healthy Schools Group. Such practice has been considered exemplar and is being adopted across Wales.

### **Sport and Physical Activity**

The Aneurin Leisure Sports Development team create and develop bespoke interventions to ensure everyone in our communities can benefit from Sport and Physical Activity to help improve their physical and mental health and wellbeing. The team supports the Vision for Sport in Wales that states 'Everyone can have a lifetime enjoyment of sport. We want Wales to be an active nation with as many people as possible inspired to be active through sport.'

Aneurin Leisure's Sports Development team deliver a wide range of sport, physical activity, community engagement and swimming opportunities across Blaenau Gwent which contributes to the new 'Vision for sport' and their mission statement, 'An active nation where everyone can have a lifelong enjoyment of sport.' Sports Wales and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 underpin and embrace the new Vision for Sport in Wales via their new Sports Wales Strategy.

Blaenau Gwent has a real passion for sport and physical activity and the Sports Development team provides participation opportunities for young people of all ages and abilities. Sports Development endeavour to support individuals, groups, families and local and national partners to promote a healthier Blaenau Gwent. To ensure the wider community have the opportunity to become more physically activity there are a number of programmes to cater for every one of all ages. Those programmes include an array of Leadership and volunteer opportunities, Physical Literacy, Secondary School extra-curricular, Primary School interventions, Club Development and funding support, Disability and Community Sport engagement. The Community Sport model has created a gateway to local 'hard to engage' communities in Blaenau Gwent, and has provided a platform for young people living in the area. Community Sport aims to encourage local young people to become more physically active in a safe and fun environment. Sessions are volunteer-led and participant centred, with an emphasis on engaging the 'right' target group into a more physically active and sporting lifestyle.

Community Sport offers an abundance of opportunities to local young people. Specific opportunities include; Fit and Fed, Street Games, SERVES and Us Girls. The team are able to use these activities as a tool to impact on some of the wider social issues such as reducing barriers to participation such as increasing community safety, reducing anti-social behaviour and social isolation. Via Healthy and Active funding, the Sports Development team have created a bespoke programme to support families who are inactive. The programme is designed to explore the reasons behind that and to create a plan unique to that family to help them become more active. Support includes free access to sport centres, free sport club membership, employability training, financial support, housing support and nutritional advice. The families are referred into the programme via schools and social services.

All the current interventions are tools not only increase physical activity but to improve the health and wellbeing of individuals, their families and the wider communities.

Sport Wales currently uses the School Sport Survey to evaluate the performance of school sport within individual local authorities. Headline measures from the latest 2018 School Sport Survey include:

- 96% of pupils would like to do more sport and this equals the national average.
- 38% of pupils are “Hooked on Sport” and this has declined in line with LAs across the Greater Gwent area.
- 55% of pupils feel PE and Sport contribute towards a healthy lifestyle.
- 51% of pupils are members of a sport club.
- BG provides 92 minutes of curricular PE per week.

There are currently 2329 children that take part in school swimming years 3 – 6, with a pass rate of 75% which is 4% higher than the national average: -

- Total No. of Primary School Pupils Swimming: 2,329
- Number of Girls Swimming: 1,174
- Number of Boys Swimming: 1,155
- Total No. of Year 6 Pupils Achieving KS 2: 405, 75%
- Total No. of Year 6 Swimming: 538
- Number of Year 6 Girls Swimming: 272
- Number of Year 6 Boys Swimming: 266
- Number of Year 6 Girls Achieving KS 2: 202, 74%
- Number of Year 6 Boys Achieving KS 2: 203, 76%
- Number of Year 6 Achieving KS 2, Abertillery: 91, 60%
- Number of Year 6 Achieving KS 2, Ebbw Vale: 196, 79%
- Number of Year 6 Achieving KS 2, Tredegar: 118, 84%

Swim school provisions are currently 1477 out of a possible 1903 (maximum occupancy) children taking part in these lessons.

- Ebbw Vale – 634/713 – Occupancy 89%
- Abertillery – 510/630 – Occupancy 81%
- Tredegar – 419/560 – Occupancy 75%

Non swimmers from KS2 are now catered for through the sports development AYP swimming, those who don't pass the criteria at

KS2 are invited to year 7 swimming classes. The current rate is 57 non swimmers invited with 35 undertaking the lessons, which equates to a 65% uptake. The new measurement for Every Child a swimmer by the end of KS 2 (year 6) will now be measured against the Nofio Ysgol framework which mirrors the Swim Wales learn to swim model.

The partnership between the Council, swimming clubs and Aneurin Leisure make the transition from swimming lessons more focused to swimming length following FINA rules and regulations. Invitations to swimmers from wave 5 – 8 are invited to trial sessions at the swimming clubs in Blaenau Gwent with the aim of retaining them in aquatic activities.

The swim data collection will now include:

- Swimming Clubs – Average number of people per lane (6) x number of lanes x number of hours
- Other aquatic clubs (water polo, canoeing, synchro, octopush, parties) – Average of 20 people per hour x number of hours
- School numbers to be recorded by numbers of children attending x number of sessions.

A summary of the main strengths for Sport and Swimming include:

1. Data from the 2018 School Sport Survey shows 96% of pupils would like to do more sport and 55% of pupils feel PE and Sport contribute towards a healthy lifestyle. There is clear latent demand for physical activity opportunities that is targeted.
2. There is a very high number of children in both our school swimming programme and learn to swim programme. A great deal of work has been put into the development of the swimming programme through the help of Swim Wales; therefore, a robust pathway exists from fundamentals to competitive swimming.
3. There are 2329 children in our 'school swimming' programme and 1477 in our 'learn to swim' programme, which gives an occupancy of 63%. This is the Council's highest participation achieved to date.
4. School swimming is rolling programme all year around during terms times, this gives more opportunities to all levels and ages of swimmers.

A summary of the main areas for development include:

1. The decline in "Hooked on Sport" figure from 43% in 2015 to 38% in 2018. The Sport Development team has streamlined its programmes, created new partnerships while developing existing ones to ensure that figure increase. Emphasise has been placed on Primary School support to create greater preventative measures. Community hubs are being established to allow sport to be at the heart of our most venerable communities.
2. The swimming programme is under review i.e. the amount of time we offer in our swimming pools, as there needs to be a balanced between public, schools and structured activities.
3. Advertising 'learn to swim' sessions frequently during the year. Targeting the marketing campaign to coincide with new term times for greater uptake while raising the occupancy of 'School Swimming' to our 'Learn to Swim' programme.

All schools have access to an annual whole-school survey - PASS (Pupil Attitude to School and Self) the cost of which is covered by the LA. This provides high quality, comprehensive and comparative data on aspects of pupil wellbeing. Approximately half of the schools currently employ the PASS. There are excellent examples of where PASS has been used very effectively to identify, support and show sustained improvements for pupil well-being. The LA is currently promoting increased use of PASS in non-participating schools.

The Wellbeing Data Set provides Challenge Advisors with useful data for further investigation into aspects of inclusion and wellbeing. However, effective use of the data sets is at an early stage and requires further development through better joint working between Challenge Advisers and LA Officers to ensure consistency when challenging schools and promoting evidence based practice.

#### **2019 Outcomes from the Youth Counselling Service:**

Involving young people is a core principle of youth work. A bi-annual consultation takes place with young people across the borough to understand what they need. In addition, the Youth Service's Advisory Group (YAMS) help decide on how priorities are set and what gaps need meeting. Each project works with young people, both in groups or as individuals to ensure they influence the delivery and design of their particular project. Additionally, young people have been directly involved in the recruitment of all key staff for the past 7 years.

The Youth Service also works collaboratively with a range of partners, both external and internal to the Council. This partnership approach is essential to ensure that young people are well supported and to meet the needs of both external funders and Council priorities.

The Counselling Service is facilitated by the Youth Service. Having access to an independent Counselling Service for 11-18 years became a statutory duty in April 2013. In addition, the Youth Service provides counselling for young people in the community for young people aged 18-25. There were 5 independent counsellors working across Blaenau Gwent schools and young people's settings on a part time basis. There was access to a male and female counsellor in all secondary schools and were generally available term time only. During the pandemic we extended counselling to also be available, should young people need/want it to cover school breaks. Counsellors had to quickly adapt their work from March 2020 to enable them to provide therapeutic support using various digital platforms and in line with which young people preferred, or had access to. For some young people, they felt that would prefer to put their sessions 'on hold' whilst not being able to be seen in their settings. It was also found that for young aged young people (Years 6 and 7 particularly) they did not want to engage digitally at all with support often provided by the counsellors via parents.

A total of 268 (318 previous year) young people aged 11-18 accessed a counsellor across 12 settings during 2019-20. Of these 153 were female and 114 were male.

Referrals to counselling can be made by any person or organisation working with a young person, who feel it may be beneficial to them. The young person should be made aware of the referral and wish to engage in the therapeutic process for it to be a successful relationship. Young people can also self-refer and Welsh Government have been keen to see that self-referrals make up a high percentage of total, 15% of self-referrals were made in BG, with the highest referrer coming through the schools at 64%. Referrals were derived a range of pupils, some with specific characteristics e.g. LAC, pupils with SEN and differing ethnicities. This is the ninth academic session where family has been in the top 3 highest predominant issue for both boys and girls. This academic year anxiety was the highest for girls with family second followed by self-worth. For boy's family was the highest predominant issue with anxiety second and self-worth also being third. This is the 6th academic session that anxiety and self-worth were also in the top 3 predominant issues.

The Youth Service has now also extended the counselling service to 18 to 25 year olds. (one day per week for Inspire 2 Work young people and one day per week for other post 18 young people). For the last year, 23 young people aged 16-25 years accessed support from the Counsellor providing a service for post 16 young people. 19 (82.6%) were female and 4 (17.4%) were male. The predominant issues in counselling for post 16 young people were anxiety, depression and domestic abuse.

Responses to counselling have been very positive. Anonymous questionnaires completed at the end of the sessions indicated the following impact:

(During times when Counsellors were working online we suspended the use of evaluations due to counselling not taking place in its usual format.)

- 100% of young people completing a questionnaire agreed or strongly agreed that counselling helped them understand their situation or feelings
- 74% agreed or strongly agreed that their relationships with others had improved since attending counselling. 26% didn't know.
- 90% agreed or strongly agreed that their problems had got easier since attending counselling. 10% didn't know
- 93.5% agreed or strongly agreed that it was easy to get to their sessions. 6.5% didn't know.
- 93.5% agreed or strongly agreed that they had a good relationship with their counsellor. 6.5% didn't know

YP Core uses a series of 10 questions which are scored and calculated on a scale. The higher the number, the higher the level of emotional distress. In the last academic year, for those attending counselling and completing a YP Core questionnaire at the beginning and end of counselling Blaenau Gwent were 1<sup>st</sup> out of 22 LAs in the highest improvement of emotional wellbeing.

When asked what were the 'best things about counselling', the majority of young people expressed that being able to talk about their thoughts, feelings, problems were the best things about counselling. Another thread was being listened to and helped.

Some young people that attend counselling in Blaenau Gwent are experiencing high levels of emotional/mental health issues such as significant depression and/or anxiety disorders, self-harm and suicide ideation. There were/are a few young people that are being 'held' by Counsellors as they were not meeting the high thresholds for assessment with PCMHs or CAMHS or not attending appointments when offered for a number of reasons. This is particularly true for post 18 young people. This is not a unique situation for young people within Blaenau Gwent however the implementation of the Space Wellbeing Panel in April 2019 has improved this. Referrals into panel can be made by anyone with the consent of parents and with young people's consent to engage in services. The main objective of the Panel is to ensure that children and young people (aged 0-18 years) are able to access the appropriate level of service to meet their emotional and mental health needs.

Future developments for the Youth Counselling Service include:

- Ensuring all school staff understand that the counselling process impacts on pupils' wellbeing and ability to learn.
- Ensuring referrals are appropriate in order to target those genuinely in need and avoid inappropriate referrals misappropriating limited counselling time.
- Providing appropriate and confidential accommodation for counselling sessions in schools
- Further develop the play therapy service established this year
- Ensuring effective transition of support from children to adult services in relation to emotional & mental health and overall wellbeing.

### **Exclusions:**

#### **Exclusions**

The last data published by Welsh Government in October 2020, reported on 2018/19 exclusions. At that time, Blaenau Gwent was 21/22 for rates of 5 day exclusions or less, 5/5 in our family of LAs and 5/5 in SEWC. The rate of exclusions per 1,000 pupils was 66 which is well above the Welsh national average of 39.1 (NB 1/22 would be least excluding).

For rate of 6 days or more BG were 13/22, 2/5 in our family of LAs and 4/5 in SEWC. The rate of exclusions per 1,000 pupils was 1.7 which is equivalent to the Welsh national average (NB 1/22 would be least excluding). At the last point that comparative Council data was available (17/18), Blaenau Gwent was 13/22 for rates of 5-day exclusions or less, 4/5 in our family of LAs and 2/5 in South East Wales Consortia (SEWC). For rate of 6 days or more we were joint 6/22, 2/5 in our family of LAs and 2/5 in SEWC.

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

Number of Exclusions:

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
<b>KS3 &amp; KS4</b>	<b>443</b>	<b>564</b>	<b>474</b>	<b>306</b>	<b>160</b>
5 days or less	439	546	460	295	155
6 days or more	4	18	14	11	5
<b>FP &amp; KS2</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>33</b>
5 days or less	74	61	132	63	33
6 days or more	6	0	1	4	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>523</b>	<b>625</b>	<b>607</b>	<b>373</b>	<b>193</b>

Number of Days:

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
<b>KS3 &amp; KS4</b>	<b>742.5</b>	<b>872</b>	<b>762</b>	<b>544</b>	<b>259.5</b>
5 days or less	705.5	766.5	628	430.5	225.5
6 days or more	37	105.5	134	113.5	34
<b>FP &amp; KS2</b>	<b>188.5</b>	<b>84.5</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>47.5</b>
5 days or less	139.5	84.5	211.5	111.5	47.5
6 days or more	49	0	14	25.5	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>931</b>	<b>956.5</b>	<b>987</b>	<b>681</b>	<b>307</b>

There has been a decrease in both number of/ and days lost to exclusions in 2020/21 compared to the previous year, particularly in KS3/4. However, the data over the last two years is not really comparable to previous years due to school closures, periods of isolation and an increase in blended learning.



KS3/4 data shows a 48% reduction in the number of exclusions in 2020/21 compared to the previous year and a 52.5% reduction in the number of days lost. Foundation Phase (FP)/KS2 data shows a 50% reduction in the number of exclusions in 2020/21 compared to the previous year and an almost 66% reduction in the number of days lost. Data at FP/KS2 shows that one school in particular accounted for nearly 50% of the exclusions.

The main reasons for exclusion follow national trends and remain largely unchanged and in line with national trends:

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

Exclusions are higher in the Summer term, followed by the Autumn term and then the Spring. This would be reflective of the situation with Covid as there were more pupils in school in the summer term, the autumn term had seen a number of families not sending the pupils back initially and schools were closed for the majority of the Spring Term.

In 2021 more pupils were excluded in year 9 than any other year group.

There were a total of six permanent exclusions in 20/21 (however one was later overturned at independent appeal) compared to nine in 2019/20. The 6 permanent exclusions were generated by 2 schools.

### **Primary and Secondary School Attendance**

**Primary school attendance** has declined between 2016/17 and 2018/19 from 94.5% to 94.3%. At the end of 2018/19, there was a slight decrease in the number of schools placed in Q1 and Q2. This places BG 3rd in the family of LAs and 5<sup>th</sup> in SEWC.

All Wales mean for Primary attendance stands at 94.6% in 18/19. BG Primary attendance is therefore 0.3pp below the all-Wales means.

Unauthorised absence at the end of 2018/19 remained the same as in 2017/18 at 1.4% but still placed BG primary schools 2<sup>nd</sup> in its family of LAs and in line with the Welsh mean (1.4%).

Persistent absenteeism in the primary sector has remained at 1.6% since 2015/16. The all-Wales means stands at 1.7% BG remains 0.1% below this and ranks joint 1<sup>st</sup> in our family of LAs and joint 2<sup>nd</sup> in SEWC.

**Secondary attendance**, declined from 93.7% (16/17) to 92.9% (18/19). Based on the trend data over the 3-year period Blaenau Gwent is placed joint 3<sup>rd</sup> in our family of local authorities and 5<sup>th</sup> across the SEWC region. All-Wales means for secondary attendance is 93.8% which places BG 0.9pp lower than the all-Wales figures.

Unauthorised absence has increased from 1.5% (16/17) to 2.2% (18/19) and BG remains above national averages (1.7%).

Persistent absenteeism in the secondary sector has increased from 3.4% to 4.1% since 2015/16, which places BG 1<sup>st</sup> in our family of local authorities and 2<sup>nd</sup> across the SEWC region. Despite the slight increase in persistent absenteeism, it is in line with the Welsh average of 4.1%.

There has been a marginal reduction in pupils with below 80% attendance at the end of July 2019 compared to the end of July 2018. (747 in 2018/19 compared to 772 in 2017/18).

Primary attendance: 3rd in family  
 Unauthorised: 2<sup>nd</sup> in family  
 PA joint: 1<sup>st</sup> in family

3 of the 4 Secondary schools exceeded WG modelled estimates for attendance.  
 PA ranked 1<sup>st</sup> in family

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the only comparative data available is for the whole school estate and that fluctuates on a weekly basis. However, Blaenau Gwent has performed well in the last few weeks of the Summer 2021 term, regularly featuring in the top 5 of LAs across Wales.

### 1.3 Wellbeing and Attitudes to Learning: Areas where good progress has been made:

- Standards of wellbeing and attitudes to learning are good in most primary and secondary schools. High proportions of both primary pupils and their parents expressed positive views about their / their children's wellbeing in schools.
- All pre-schools and schools participate in effective Healthy School programmes with exemplar work being recognised nationally and there are effective swimming programmes with high levels of achievement for learners in place. The proportions of CYP attending sports centres and enjoying PE in school on a weekly basis is higher than the national averages. There has been an excellent number and range of events to engage and seek the views of children and young people.
- An effective 11-18 counselling service in place for with very positive feedback from attendees, with an extended service for 18-25 year olds.
- BG is one of only a very few Councils to have a fully compliant 3<sup>rd</sup> School Sport Survey to provide an evidence base to inform more targeted work.
- 3 out of 4 BG secondary schools exceeded the WG modelled figures for attendance in 2018-19.
- Relatively low rate of fixed-term exclusions compared with other LAs in Wales.
- Improving procedures for tracking children missing education.
- An improving trend of increased opportunities for *pupil voice* in BG schools and greater learner participation in decision-making.
- Outcomes for registered young people are excellent.

### 1.3 Wellbeing and Attitudes to Learning: Areas requiring improvement:

#### Attendance and Persistent Absenteeism:

##### Primary:

To improve primary school attendance in BG from 94.2% to equate at least to the all-Wales mean of 94.6%.

To reduce primary unauthorised absence in BG from 1.4% to below the all-Wales means which is 1.4%

To work to reduce PA in the primary sector to well below that of the all-Wales means i.e. Wales= 1.8%, BG=2.0%

**Secondary:**

To improve secondary school attendance from 92.9% to 93.8% (all-Wales means).

To reduce unauthorised absence in the secondary sector in BG from 2.2% to below that of the all-Wales means (1.7%)

To reduce PA in the secondary sector in BG from 5.0% to below that of the all-Wales means (also currently 4.6%)

To continue to reduce the numbers of pupils excluded in primary and secondary sectors.

To continue to improve pupil behaviour in schools and staff response to pupil concerns

To further enhance pupil voice activities to inform self-evaluation planning activities

**Inspection Area 2 – Education Services Leads CG/JS/MJ/ Inclusion/HD-E (EAS)**

**2.1 Support for school improvement**

**The local authority knows its schools very well and acts swiftly and uses its full statutory powers to support and improve standards within them. The level of challenge provided is graduated with the identified needs within each school setting. This has resulted in significant improvements during recent years e.g. improved outcomes in targeted areas, fewer schools with amber & red categorisation and improved inspection outcomes.** In addition, examples of excellent practice have been identified in BG schools more frequently than in past years. A range of established and improved procedures and protocols have contributed to these better outcomes e.g. improved training / mentoring for governing bodies, regionally agreed protocols, more effective intervention panels, forensic at-risk registers and expert HR advice. Throughout the pandemic the Council has continued with its support to schools identified as a cause for concern through holding regular check-in and catch up meetings.

The LA understands the importance of close consultation with relevant stakeholders in addressing school improvement e.g. all Headteachers and School Governors were engaged in the consultation process when developing the revised Partnership Agreement, which was implemented during Summer 2018. As a consequence, the PA is now better understood and aligned to our Vision for Education in Blaenau Gwent.

LA and EAS officers are effective in coordinating support and interventions within schools and so avoid unnecessary duplication of provision. The LA robustly monitors EAS support and the impact of Challenge Adviser work and curriculum support. In particular, the LA ensures that support work focuses on its priorities and in targeting those schools in greatest need. Evaluations of Challenge Adviser notes and EAS reports have generally been good. The introduction of FADE reports as part of the LA's self-evaluation procedures has contributed to this and ensured consistency of approach. The impact of these actions are becoming evident e.g. the school's single plan/SDP more clearly reflect LA priorities and school self-evaluation processes have improved particularly for primary schools.

A major contributing factor to school improvement is the wide range of data and information made available to schools, LA, EAS and Council officers. Performance data is shared with all head teachers through Hwb the EAS School Profile and in HT meetings. This has helped schools to improve their own analyses and evaluations and helped them better identify priorities for improvement. While this has undoubtedly helped schools to better inform their own improvement planning, target setting

procedures have not always benefitted e.g. about one-half of schools had substantial discrepancies between outcomes and targets at each key stage in 2019 and in previous years. The accuracy and reliability of assessment procedures within a minority of schools was also questioned by differences between 2019 NC and National Test results. These shortcomings are linked and so the LA and support services need to further develop teachers' assessment skills particularly as schools move to develop formative assessment procedures aligned with forthcoming curriculum changes.

Data and information is also made available to and used effectively by a wide range of support services e.g. LA inclusion officers and educational psychologists. This allows individual support to be identified and provided for individual learners particularly those in vulnerable groups and most at risk of underachievement. Some vulnerable groups have clearly benefitted from support e.g. BG pupils from differing ethnic groups and statemented pupils have achieved good or very good outcomes in recent years. However, other groups have not achieved as well e.g. eFSM pupils & SEN pupils within KS3 & 4. Consequently, the LA needs to direct greater support to these groups and in particular to the teaching and learning approaches currently provided for them and also the more recent approach to quality assuring PDG spend plans will further support improved targeting of support for specific groups.

**The proportion of educational settings attaining good judgements has continued to increase during 2016-19** and the proportion receiving adequate or lower judgements has continued to decrease over the same period. This generally reflects improved standards, teaching and leadership in Blaenau Gwent educational settings. The case studies requested from Blaen-y-Cwm, St Marys RC and Cwm Primary as well as Pen y Cwm and Tredegar evidence excellent practice across a larger range of settings.

The school subject to Estyn Significant Improvement (ALC) continues to receive tailored bespoke support from the LA and EAS. The recent Estyn monitoring visit noted that progress has been made against some of the recommendations and a further revisit is anticipated in the spring term 2020. Progress through recommendations forms the core of the PIAP that is in place and the LA appropriately discharges its statutory function for a school causing a concern through the use of powers of intervention through the statutory Schools Causing Concern framework. BFS was placed in Special Measures in December 2019, the PIAP and LA Statement are being implemented. A full package of support is in place in line with the WG's Multi-Agency Support for Schools in Special Measures initiative, including a 'one plan' approach.

A forensic approach to progress through the Intervention Panel is taken which encompasses a Council wide support programme at all levels of the organisation to ensure progress continues to be made at an appropriate pace. **Overall, school categorisation at primary level remains good.** Just 2 primary schools are indicated as in need of improvement (Sofrydd and Glyncoed) and one all-through and one secondary setting in need of urgent improvement (Abertillery and Brynmawr Foundation School); there is strong evidence of cultural change occurring in both settings due to new HTs and senior teams in place in both schools.

**The LA has made good progress in improving its work to support, challenge and intervene in underperforming schools.** Specific schools are identified according to the National Model and resources are targeted appropriately on those with the greatest need. There is a good track record of schools improving following post-inspection intervention. However, 2019 results indicated the same few underperforming schools as in previous years and these continue to be of concern with regard to the quality of learning and pupil standards.

Earlier target setting, provisional categorisation and greater challenge is currently being employed to hasten support for these centres. In addition, good practice is effectively shared across schools for example, the ACE agenda in Ebbw Fawr Learning Community which is also learning network school, Tredegar is offering support

across a range of subject specialisms as well as a professional learning pioneer school. Glanhowy Primary is a learning network schools and Welsh Hwb school, Beaufort Primary is a lead partner school working with Cardiff Metropolitan University on ITT, Willowtown Primary is a learning network school for Maths and STEM and also a regional professional learning pioneer school, St Illtyd's Primary is a quality improvement school and Deighton is a learning network schools for DCF.

The Corporate Director of Education, Executive Member for Education, EAS Principal Advisor and Strategic Education Improvement Manager devise an agreed approach for schools causing concern, holding them to account for progress and keeping support plans under review.

Improving literacy, numeracy and reducing the performance gap due to disadvantage are key priorities for the LA and these are reflected within key LA Business Plans as well as the EAS Business Plan. The LA's schools have achieved considerable success in these areas during the last few years e.g. 2019 results indicated improved literacy standards in the Foundation Phase, good value-added progress in reading & maths / numeracy at KS2 and improved writing outcomes at KS3. However, L4+ writing outcomes fell at KS2 in 2019, value-added progress in English was weak in KS3, and the differences between eFSM and non-eFSM outcomes have generally increased.

Another key priority is to increase the number / proportion of learners achieving higher NC levels and GCSE grades. There have been some improvements in relation to this e.g. L6+ outcomes improved for English and Welsh 2<sup>nd</sup> language during 2017-19 and particularly for 2019 and the proportion of learners gaining GCSE A\*/A grades improved in both English and maths in 2019. However, the proportion of learners gaining GCSE 5 A\*/A grades in 2019 was below the LA target and, at post-16, the proportion of learners attaining higher level grades (A\*/A) was lower than the all-Wales means at both A and AS level.

The below-average outcomes at higher levels is mainly attributable to the low literacy & numeracy skills possessed by pupils on entry to school. Value-added progress is generally good for both language & maths within KS2 and at least adequate for reading and numeracy (reasoning) within KS3. However, the low starting points limit what learners may achieve at each key stage – particularly at higher levels. **Consequently, the LA intends to have greater focus on pre-school and early years' development in order to achieve higher starting points for learners and so higher outcomes at each subsequent NC stage.** In tandem with this, the LA intends to develop individual, school and whole-authority value-added measures for the Foundation Phase in order to monitor the effectiveness of its actions.

**The LA has made very strong progress in line with its strategy for improving standards in ICT during the last 2 academic sessions.** This has involved continued effective implementation of the Infrastructure and Connectivity Project, along with of Waves 1-4 of the WG Hwb EdTech Programme. In addition, Education have made good progress towards the development of a strategy and associated sustainability plan for both infrastructure and devices in BG. As a result, the LA and SRS now have in-depth appreciation of the BG position in relation ICT infrastructure, connectivity, device status, management, ratios etc. It is understood that BG schools are well placed to effectively facilitate implementation of the Digital Competency Framework. Blaenau Gwent's Infrastructure and Connectivity Project (ICP) has reached completion, addressing the following:

- the quality, quantity and location of wireless access points in classrooms and schools;
- migration to the Schools SRS Edu system; and,
- the speed and capacity of wireless access, along with improves support to schools.

As a direct result of the aforementioned projects, the LA and its schools are compliant with the Hwb Education Digital Standards. **The status of the ICP project placed Blaenau Gwent in a very strong position to further enhance the infrastructure in line with the first 3 waves of Hwb EdTech funding.**

Hwb EdTech funding (waves 1-3) has permitted additional infrastructure priorities to be addressed that the ICP did not cover, further enhancing provision throughout the school estate. The LA has made very good progress despite the emergency situation, successfully signing off the first 3 waves in the autumn-term 2020, and having made very strong progress towards the completion of Wave 4. Up to January 2021 2,051 end of life devices had been replaced in schools, since then an additional 1,071 Chromebooks have been allocated to the schools, along with the replacement of an additional 1,072 end of life devices throughout the school estate. We currently have 3,347 devices across the school estate that are in need of replacement. Our long-term plan is to replace 20-25 % of end of life devices per on year as a rolling programme to ensure technology refresh is able to effectively facilitate the delivery of teaching and learning. The LA are working with the schools re: affordability, desired ratios and aspirations for ICT within the schools, and are in the process of establishing a 5-year sustainability plan to ensure that the schools have a high level of suitable, usable devices at all times. This method seeks to avoid significant cost pressures for schools, whereby all devices require replacement at once. We are working with WG to look to replace an additional 1,500 end of life devices over the course of next academic year, which would enable us to effectively progress onto Wave 5 (audio visual). In support of blended learning, to date the LA has used a mixture of its own and Welsh Govt. funding to support digitally disadvantaged learners, by repurposing 1,359 end of life devices, which have distributed to learners over the course of the last academic session. In addition, 161 Mi-Fi devices have been allocated to digitally disadvantaged learners requiring connectivity support. Ongoing support in planned for the forthcoming academic session.

**The EAS provides schools with good quality curriculum support for literacy, numeracy, Welsh language, the Foundation Phase and IT. The provision of frameworks to support curriculum development, monitoring and quality assurance is particularly valued by schools.** School understand the differentiated support and challenge policy and the need for targeting support in identified schools. As previously indicated, greater emphasis needs to be given to supporting schools to improve English / literacy and particularly within early years.

**The LA has increased its focus on improving the outcomes of vulnerable groups.** This is supported by the Wellbeing Data Pack and by establishing closer working arrangements between LA inclusion services and the EAS. In particular, the LA aims to improve performance of eFSM pupils in KS3 & 4 and those learners with a record of underachievement in previous years. There has been some success in this with eFSM pupils achieving better than expected progress in reading and numeracy reasoning within KS3 during 2016-19, a narrowing of the performance gap in numeracy reasoning for the 2019 Y9 cohort and by eFSM pupils achieving good outcomes for most KS4 performance indicators in 2019.

**However, eFSM outcomes trail those of non-eFSM learners at all key stages and progress rates for the 2019 cohorts were lower than those of non- eFSM pupils for most performance indicators.** The LA has used individual pupil tracking for value-added progress to good effect. Individual pupil, class and whole school profiles have helped to determine precisely the effectiveness of teaching & learning within centres. The introduction of the LA Virtual School (VS) approach to collating and using 'matched data' to better understand and evaluate measures of progress, along with greater use of contextual value added measures has helped in this. However, the move to restrict National Test outcomes to schools will limit the LA's ability to conduct such analyses and prevent value-added progress to be determined.

**Partnership working between schools, Coleg Gwent and WBTPs is developing; 2020 vocational outcomes at Coleg Gwent were good. A level and A/S level 2020/21 Centre Determined Grades results were also good and comparable to the national averages except for a lower proportion of learners attaining A\* / A grades.**

- A Level Pass Rate 99.1% in 2020-21, which is in line with the national mean average.
- A\*-A grades 31% (29% previous year).
- A\*-C grades 82% (88% year previous).

**A Level Results**

	A* - E	A* - C	A* - A
2021	99.1	81.9	31.1
2020	100.0	88.0	29.1
2019	100.0	75.9	15.3
2018	98.7	74.4	15.6

**A/S Level Results**

A* - E	A* - C	A* - A
94.1	70.2	19.4
92.7	68.9	17.4
90.9	63.5	14.8
89.9	58.2	10.3

Improved partnership working between the LA and Coleg Gwent who now provide the following:

- Annual summary reports for Blaenau Gwent learners attending all college campuses which could be amended / extended to correspond with current WG performance indicators and so allow comparisons to be made with other LAs within Wales.
- Destination data for Blaenau Gwent learners to both the LA and Careers Wales.
- Regular updates of learner withdrawals and learner circumstances in order that the LA Youth Service might provide further support to identified individuals.

As a consequence, Coleg Gwent has provided more detailed information regarding learner outcomes during 2019-20 and now provides monthly updates on retention rates and specific learner withdrawals (initiated October 2019); this has further enabled the Youth Service to provide improved, targeted support at an earlier stage, along with information provided by Careers Wales.

**Transition arrangements between childcare practitioners and foundation phase settings is good.** All childcare practitioners are trained to deliver good quality practice and engage in effective visit programmes between settings. Flying Start provision and practice (where it is available) is very good and provide a useful model for the development of effective transition practice. However, transition information needs to be simplified for receiving classroom staff.

The LA ensures that there is a range of support strategies and professional development opportunities available for school staff at all level e.g. the Excellence in Teaching and Learning Framework (ETF), ILM and PGCE in Education Leadership and Management. In addition, the EAS provides leadership programmes and schools organise their own development programmes such as Olevi. Schools also work together in a number of ways e.g. school-to-school support strategies and wider CPD and networking activities. These have proved effective in disseminating good practice.

**The LA has implemented a supportive induction programme for Headteachers** and aspiring school senior leadership involving collaboration between LA officers, EAS colleagues and head teachers. The LA and National HT Mentors are aligned.

**School leaders are playing an increasingly active and effective role in the co-production and implementation of LA and SEWC regional strategy as evidenced through the EAS Education HT Steering Group, the ICT strategy group as well as the Strategic HT group for OD issues, also the school's Budget Forum and JCC Trade Union meetings.**

For schools causing concern, there is effective use of high quality mentor Headteachers to support leadership, together with support from schools, which demonstrate high quality provision and outcomes for example Cardiff High School for BFS. The identification of high quality leaders and schools by the EAS has been key to the success of this approach, which builds on the regional school-to-school support strategy. Support and intervention plans ensure coordinated approaches to supporting leaders and governors in schools causing concern. Specialist HR support offered through the EAS to support Headteachers and governors in developing approaches to tackling underperformance of leaders and teachers is effective, with quality training provided on Regional Pay Policy and Performance Management. This compliments the support available from the LA when dealing with individual cases.

The LA ensures that there is a good range of support strategies for improving the quality of school governance e.g. governor training programmes, supported self-evaluation arrangements, governor networking meetings and an Annual Regional Conference ensures effective communication with governors and updates on national strategies, priorities, and school / LA performance. However, attendance at these events can be weak and improving governor engagement is a priority for the LA for example a cluster based approach is being rolled out in the summer term 2020.

There are established processes for the selection and appointment of LA governors to schools but the robustness of monitoring arrangements to ensure sufficiency of governors needs to be improved. A number of high quality governors have been identified who serve temporarily on governing bodies in schools causing concern as a part of the LA's formal powers of intervention. They provide effective models of good governance and contribute to improving procedures and general governance in schools.

The LA has increasing awareness of the management needs of governors and senior middle leaders. Current support for school leaders and governors is both universal and bespoke but demonstrating a positive impact on outcomes e.g. by improving school categorisation, school inspection findings and good or better progress through the school's single plan.

Schools causing concern processes are proving to be effective mechanisms to provide targeted support and challenge to Head teachers and Chairs of Governors to improve the capacity of the setting to improve. Formal powers of intervention have been used to secure the necessary changes in governance, leadership and consequently the capacity of the school to improve. There is a good track record of schools increasing their capacity to improve and sustaining improvement following Council intervention, for example Ebbw Fawr Learning Community, Bro Helyg, Willoughton and Glyncoed with new senior leaders, teams and Governors in ALC and BFS. The Hwb system is used by schools to facilitate school planning, monitoring and evaluation of impact of all grant spend for example, EIG, PDG, PL, LAC and PDG LAC against funding plans. This provides a transparent approach to grant funding and enables schools to more effectively evaluate outcomes/impact against spend.

## **2.1 Support for school improvement:**

### **2.1 Areas where good progress has been made and where support for school improvement has been effective:**

- **The LA has appointed a Head of School Improvement and Inclusion post in the new structure to add capacity in this area of work.**
- **The LA has improved and detailed knowledge of individual, class and school performance particularly in relation to value-added progress.**
- **Improved coordination of support to schools via good partnership working between the LA and EAS.**



- Improved School Categorisation and School Inspection profile over the last 3 years.
- Good outcomes / progress for identified vulnerable groups in recent years.
- The Council is swift in its use of statutory powers which are kept under review.
- Post 16 arrangements are strengthened and the pathways for learning are improving.
- Strong progress on ICT infrastructure and connectivity developments.
- The process for the appointment of LA Governors is now well established and there is evidence of improved governance in a majority of schools.

#### 2.1 Areas requiring improvement:

- Partnership work between BG Inclusion Services and EAS Challenge Advisers needs to develop further.
- Support to improve early language acquisition and general skill development in the early years.
- Support to improve the effectiveness of learning & teaching of English / reading & maths / numeracy within KS3 & 4 with a particular focus on eFSM pupils and vulnerable groups.
- Support to improve the effectiveness of PDG grant planning and implementation.
- Increasing the number / proportions of learners who achieve higher level outcomes at each key stage, but particularly in the Foundation Phase.
- Support for assessment and target setting procedures within schools, with a particular focus on formative (assessment for learning).
- Increasing opportunities for schools to share good practice e.g. Joint Headteachers' meetings.
- The risk is that the COVID-19 emergency response has impacted upon learner progression across the board, but particularly in KS4 and early year's skill development e.g. language acquisition.

#### 2.2 The quality of support for vulnerable learners

It should be noted that COVID-19 has increased the level of eFSM across the school estate. Evaluations of the quality and effectiveness of provision is illustrated by pupil progress and achievement, which in turn informs the content of the evaluative narrative below:

##### For Pupils Eligible for Free School Meals:

**The quality of support for eFSM pupils in all phases and at all key stages needs to be improved so that performance matches that of non-FSM pupils.** This is particularly the case for more-able pupils where differences in outcomes are greater. Where performance gaps are lower than national figures, this is usually due to the performance of non-FSM being lower than their national peers and indicates that the quality of support to improve performance of non-FSM pupils also needs to be improved. Progress of both eFSM and non-eFSM pupils during **KS3** was higher than expected in both reading and numeracy reasoning with eFSM pupils making the greater progress in the latter. This indicates that the quality of support for these skills was generally good. However, eFSM pupils made less progress than non-eFSM pupils in reading and confirms that enhanced support is required for this area. Both groups made less than expected progress in NC levels highlighting the need to improve the quality of curriculum support for all learners (including non-FSM) within KS3.

At **KS4**, differences between eFSM and non-eFSM GCSE outcomes were lower than the national means but mainly attributable to weaker outcomes for the latter group. The average progress made by eFSM pupils in English and in maths improved during the last 2 years but fell for non-eFSM pupils. However, for both groups, progress was only just about adequate in English and unsatisfactory in maths / numeracy. This emphasises the need to improve the quality of teaching and learning in these areas and for all pupils at KS4.

LA and EAS process in this regard has been developed more recently: for example, all schools' PDG plans are double checked for appropriateness by the EAS and signed off by the LA to help ensure that support is appropriately targeted. During these meetings the Headteacher is requested to set out how they intend to secure effective use of the PDG and expected outcomes and impact. This practice is fairly new but will continue to develop and become more refined going forward.

#### **For Pupils Presenting with Special Educational Needs:**

In preparation and in readiness for the ALN ACT and also for 2019 PLASC all schools reviewed their SEN registers. This activity was based on the findings of a pilot group of 5 schools which resulted in all schools undertaking moderation activity on their SEN Registers to establish improved consistency across all learners in Blaenau Gwent. This evaluation is based on matched data for pupils present throughout each key stage. In general, pupils with **statements within the FP, KS2 & 3 have achieved well in recent years indicating that the quality and effectiveness of support is good. In particular, statemented pupils generally made good progress within KS2 & 3 and particularly for reading and numeracy skills. This confirms that the quality of provision for these pupils has been effective.**

Conversely, pupils recorded as on **SA & SA+ made relatively lower progress in these areas during KS2 & 3.** This clearly indicates the need for greater improvement in the quality of provision and an increased focus on attainment and progress of these groups within these key stages.

**At KS4, the proportions of SEN pupils attaining A\*-C and A\*-G grades were relatively high,** much improved compared to previous years and **generally similar to those for non-SEN pupils.** The proportions of pupils attaining A\*-C grades improved substantially **for all SEN categories** in both English language and maths in 2019. Progress rates for SEN pupils were also generally similar to non-SEN pupils. (However, as for mainstream pupils, these were just adequate in English / literature but weaker for maths / numeracy)

**The improved progress for SEN groups in both subject areas during 2017-19 is encouraging** and particularly for the large group (70) of SA+ pupils in English and indicates that the quality of support for these pupils has generally been effective. However, the relatively weak progress made by pupils (particularly in maths) **clearly indicates that more tailored and targeted support is needed for pupils with SEN throughout KS4.**

#### **For Pupils Attending Resource Bases (RB):**

##### **KS2**

Of the 9 pupils in the 2019 cohort (5 with SEN statements), all but 1 progressed at least 1 NC level for language and all did so for maths during KS2. About one-half of pupils progressed 2 NC levels in both languages in maths. This indicates that in KS 2 the quality and effectiveness of support for pupils registered for NC assessments was at least adequate. However, there is a need to continue to improve the quality of support in order to ensure all pupils attending the RB achieve expected progress.

### KS3

There were 14 pupils in the 2019 cohort (6 with SEN statements). 10 of these had matched test data available. Of these, about one-half progressed at least 1 NC level for language and for maths during KS3. One pupil progressed 3 NC levels in both languages in maths while 2 others progressed 2 NC levels in maths only. This indicates that the quality and effectiveness of support was at least adequate.

However, the mean progress rates for **RB pupils were generally lower than for the whole BG cohort and particularly for reading**. Consequently, there is a need to continue to improve the quality of support in order to **ensure all pupils attending the RB achieve expected progress particularly in the latter area**.

### KS4

There were 7 pupils in the 2019 cohort (6 with SEN statements). Of these, 5 pupils attained a C grade or better in English language but only 3 did so in maths. 5 pupils progressed 1 or more NC levels in English language but only 2 did so in maths. 2 pupils failed to progress at all in English and maths while 3 pupils regressed in the latter.

**The mean progress rate for RB pupils in English language was higher than that of the whole BG cohort and better than expected. However, the mean progress rate for maths indicated no progression overall. The outcomes indicate that the quality of support in KS 4 was generally good for English particularly when taking into account the educational needs of the cohort. However, the weaker outcomes in maths / numeracy indicate that the quality of support in this subject and in KS4 needs to be improved.**

### For Pupils Attending the River Centre 3-16 Special SEBD School.

### KS3

There were 11 pupils in 2019 cohort. 4 had SEN statements, 3 were LAC, 7 were at SA+ and the majority were known to YOT. Of these, about one-half of the cohort progressed at least 1 NC level in English while fewer did so in maths. The progress rates for reading and numeracy reasoning were better than expected and higher than the BG means - particularly for reading. **These outcomes indicate that, given the potential challenges to learning encountered by these pupils, the quality and effectiveness of support within KS3 was effective.**

### KS4

There were 10 pupils in the 2019 cohort. A minority had contributing contextual factors. 6 pupils achieved a GCSE in English while 7 did so in maths. **Only one pupil gained a C grade or better in either subject.** 5 progressed at least 1 NC level in English but only 3 did so in maths. 4 pupils regressed in both subjects.

**These results indicate comparatively weak outcomes and progress for SEBD pupils at KS4 and that the quality and effectiveness of support needs to be improved in both English and maths / numeracy but particularly in Maths.**

### Support for Excluded pupils:

**Over the last 4 years Headteacher turnover at both secondary and primary has been significant i.e. all new Headteachers and senior staff at secondary level and approximately 60% turnover at Primary level; this turnover at senior leadership level has been welcomed and supported by the local authority. This has brought a fresh approach to expectations regarding pupil behaviour, pupil/teacher interactions and relationships.** New senior leaders have gone on to develop new and more inclusive provision in line with the development of a continuum of provision provided by the local Authority. Overall, exclusion figures reflect this developmental journey which is also reflected in the much improved provision evidenced in school categorisation, for example the number of green schools increasing from 2 in 2014 to 13 in 2020.

Monitoring of pupil level exclusion data has improved by all Inclusion teams and is now regarded as being effective, informing the quality of Officer work and dialogue with individual schools. The establishment of the Safer Schools Partnership approach is beginning to support improved partnership work which will further support work to reduce exclusions. Work to progress the Respect and Resilience action plan is well underway. Reducing exclusions is a key area requiring improvement.

All schools have access to the educational psychology service which provides advice and support to schools regarding pupils at risk of exclusion. The service also provides training to schools to build capacity in terms of their behaviour management as well as supporting the work of ELSAs within schools.

All pupils who are permanently excluded receive tuition from the 16<sup>th</sup> day. Alternative placements are sought either via school admissions into a mainstream school or via the ALN Panel to more specialist provision. The ALN Service has been established which includes a teacher with responsibility for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The River Centre provides provision for those pupils for whom mainstream no longer is appropriate.

### **Youth Service Support for Excluded Pupils**

**The Youth Service utilises the highly effective Early Identification Tool (as part of the YEP Framework) to work with schools to identify young people most at risk of becoming NEET in the future, including being excluded, and support is provided through the Inspire 2 Achieve project. Additionally, young people at risk of exclusion or those excluded are also supported through the Youth Service's Positive Futures project.**

The Positive Futures School group, supports young people on the cusp of permanent exclusion, to remain in or return to school. Youth Workers support the young people to develop positive relationships with other young people and adults, developing an understanding of the barriers they face in mainstream school, and supporting the young person and work with the school to help them stay in or return to school. The project works intensively with identified young people outside of school and one evening a week, supported by a small team of 3. The project delivers the Princes Trust Award and a variety of opportunities such as martial arts, boxing, gang and violence workshops, substance misuse workshops, anger management and self-esteem. An SLA is in place with the Community Psychology Team, where the Community Psychologist supports the team one hour a week to offer support, advice and a reflective practise session each week. The outcomes from this project are good, with the risk of permanent exclusion significantly reduced.

### **Inspire 2 Achieve supports young people well within the school who are identified through the Early Identification Tool as being at risk of becoming NEET.**

There are 12 members of staff in the Inspire 2 Achieve (I2A) team. This includes 1 x team leader, 5 x school based youth workers, 4 x transition youth workers (2 x Yr 6/7, 2 x Yr 11 including year 11 Electively Home Educated young people) and 1 x Emotional and Mental Health youth worker. Usual support includes one to one support and group programmes depending on the needs of the individual in an out of school. Young people develop individual action plans base on their need, and support is provided on both a one to one and group basis. Staff link with Careers Wales, Counsellors and pastoral staff within the schools. Support is also offered to young people during school holidays. Ultimately, the aim of the project is to support young people to remain in school and to reduce their risk of becoming NEET. The impact of the project is good, with over half supported significantly reducing their risk of becoming NEET and 85% improving soft skills such as confidence, self-esteem and managing their emotions.

Since 2016 (when team was established): 752 young people have been supported, 115 above target at this stage (372 males, 379 females), with one young person identifying as Non-Binary. Due to COVID, we have not closed any young people to the service this year. This is being reviewed over the summer. Therefore, the outcomes recorded are those captured up to March 2020. 431 closed, and the following outcomes are recorded:

- 24% have gained qualifications,
- 76% have entered further learning
- 52% have reduced their risk of becoming NEET.
- 93% have improved their soft skills.

For the period of January to December 2020, 140 new young people were supported (81 males, 59 female). All school based youth workers supported school leavers this year, rather than just the two transition workers. This was due to the concerns that COVID could have on transition and has contributed to the numbers of young people transitioning successfully.

Emotional and Physical Wellbeing became the dominant theme for 2020. Ninety wellbeing packs were delivered, qualifications were delivered, support was provided to ensure young people had appropriate equipment and wi-fi access. Staff liaised with schools, arranged community walks and virtual activities. All to keep young people engaged in various ways and offer support.

**In June 2020, the Youth Service won a national Youth Work in Wales Excellence Award and the Inspire programmes were key to that prestigious award.**

#### **For More-Able pupils:**

The quality of support for our more-able pupils is indicated by their progress and outcomes as follows:

The Mean NC progress in English and in maths from FP to end of KS2 was higher for MAT (L5+) pupils than for those attaining L4 or lower i.e. 2.4 as opposed to 1.9. The Mean progress in NT reading and in numeracy reasoning from F Phase to end of KS 2 was much higher for MAT (SAS >115) pupils than for those attaining lower SAS scores

In KS3 L6+ English results improved in pupils BG for 2019 (against a national backdrop of decline) with a consequent narrowing of the performance gap. The Mean progress in English and in maths between KS 2 and KS 3 was higher for MAT (L6 & L7+) pupils than for those attaining L5 or lower i.e. 1.7 and 1.8 as opposed to 0.9 for lower levels. The Mean progress between KS 2 and KS 3 in reading and in numeracy reasoning was much higher for MAT (SAS >115) pupils than for those attaining lower SAS scores

**Overall, MAT pupils not only attain higher NC levels and national test scores, they also progress at a faster rate than those with lower outcomes at the previous key stage.** This indicates that differences in outcomes between low and high attaining pupils increase as they progress through the key stages and that **attainment at both FP and KS2 are significant determinants of future progress.** The quality of support to ensure good progress is of reasonable quality and effectiveness, however, the quality of support to improve early outcomes in the Foundation Phase needs to improve.

Consequently, a key priority is to ensure that support is effective at maximising attainment in the Early Years and on **improving pupils' attainment at the earliest stage possible** i.e. within the FP or prior to this. Work with schools and the EAS is underway to start to address this but this remains a key area for improvement.

#### **For Pupils Who Present as Low Attenders:**

##### **KS3**

There were 13 low attenders in the 2019 cohort (1 statemented, 3 on SA+, 3 on SA, 3 were LAC, 1 EAL and 2 were YOT. Only 7 had matching data for KS2 & 3. 4 pupils attained NC L5 in English and 8 did so in Maths. **However, all NC and NT results were lower than for the whole BG Y9 cohort.**

One-third of low attenders progressed by at least 1 NC level in English during KS 3 and about two-thirds did so in Maths. **Given the poor attendance and the range of contextual factors related to some pupils, low attenders made reasonable progress during KS3. This suggests that the quality of support was at least adequate. However, the quality and effectiveness of support needs to improve so that outcomes and progress of these at-risk pupils matches those of pupils with average attendance levels.**

##### **KS4**

There were 38 low attenders in the 2019 cohort. About one-quarter were identified as having SEN. About one-half of them attained grade C or better in English and maths. Two-thirds progressed more than 1 NC level in English and one-third did so in Maths. **However, a significant proportion failed to progress or even regressed in both subjects and particularly so in Maths.**

Overall, low attenders within KS4 had similar or higher outcomes and average progress rates to the mainstream cohort in English language / literature and in maths / numeracy. This indicates that support in language and maths development for low attenders is generally effective for a majority of low attenders at KS4 and / or a significant proportion of low attendance (of able pupils) was attributable to illness / injury rather than truancy. **Significant additional support will undoubtedly be required to address the lack of progress or regression demonstrated by a minority of these pupils.**

#### **2019 Pregnant School Girls:**

In July 2019 there were one pregnant school girl and one young mum both of whom have now left statutory education. Pupil A's attendance at the end of 2019 was 45% but prior to starting maternity leave in January 2019 her attendance was 98%. This pupil had no SEN. This pupil is currently being supported by Social Services. Pupil B's attendance at the end of 2019 was 85% but prior to study leave starting in June 2019 her attendance was 95%. This pupil also had no SEN. KS3 attainment for both pupils at KS 3 was good and at L5 for all core subjects including the CSI. At KS4, one of the two pupils achieved 5+ GCSEs grade A-G including English but not maths.

**The Policy for Pregnant School Girls and Young Parents has now been formally adopted by schools who implement the support set out therein.**

#### **For pupils of Ethnic Minority:**

25 pupils in KS 2 in 2019 with EAL attained higher NC levels and NT scores than the Y6 BG cohort as a whole. All but 4 progressed at least 2 NC levels in English and all but 2 did so in Maths. **Over 1/5th progressed 3 NC levels in English and about 1/3 did so in Maths. The mean NC progress rates were higher than the BG Y6 cohort as a whole.**

There were 21 pupils (16 matched) in KS 3 and all but 2 attained L5 in English and Maths. 2/3rds attained L6 in English and Maths. **NC and NT results were similar or higher than BG Y9 cohort as a whole. 1/3rd progressed by greater than 2 NC levels in English and Maths.**

There were 17 pupils in KS 4 10 attained GCSE grade C in English but only 5 did so in Maths. 5 did not make progress but also had SEN and other presenting need.

**Overall, in KS4 EM pupils had similar outcomes and average progress rates to non-EM pupils in English language / literature but lower in maths / numeracy. This suggest that support for language development is generally effective at KS4 but that EM pupils may find more difficulty in transposing their language skills within a mathematical context.**

**Outcomes and progress indicate that the quality of support for ethnic minority pupils in all phases and key stages is good, with more improvement in effectiveness of support required in Maths at KS 4.**

#### **Children and Young People Who are Looked After (CLA):**

##### **KS2**

There were 8 CLA in the 2019 cohort (3 on SA, 3 on SA+ & 1 with a statement). 6 attained L4 or better in English and in maths. The mean NC level for CLA was similar to that of the whole BG Y6 cohort in language but lower in maths. Mean national test scores for CLA were lower for both reading and numeracy reasoning. 7 pupils progressed 2 or more NC levels and the mean progress rates were similar to that of the BG Y6 cohort as a whole. **Overall, these outcomes indicate that support for CLA within KS2 is good but that further support is required for reading and numeracy reasoning in order to improve outcomes in national tests.**

##### **KS3**

There were 14 CLA in the 2019 cohort (2 on SA, 4 on SA+ & 2 with statements). 9 pupils with matched NC results attained L5 or better in English and in maths. A majority of CLA progressed at least 1 NC level in English and maths during KS3 while the mean progress rates for CLA in reading and numeracy reasoning were notably higher than for the whole BG cohort. **However, the mean NC scores and national test results were lower than the BG Y9 cohort as a whole and particularly so for reading. Overall, these outcomes indicate that support for CLA within KS3 is good but that further support is required to further raise NC outcomes and national test results.**

##### **KS4**

There were 10 CLA in the 2019 cohort. Of these, 4 attained a GCSE grade C or better in English and in maths. **The average grades for CLA were the same as the KS 4 cohort as a whole in BG.** Over one-half of pupils progressed at least 1 NC level in English and maths which was again similar to that of the whole Y11 cohort although both were below expected values. **These outcomes indicate that the quality and effectiveness of pupil support for CLA in English and maths within KS4 is generally good.**

**The LA fulfils statutory duties for children looked after well overall. There are effective links between CLA and Inclusion Officers and arrangements to monitor the educational achievement of CLA placed within the LA have improved to include reporting to Corporate Parenting and ALN QA monitoring group.**

Monitoring arrangements for CLA with statements of SEN and those placed out of county are robust through annual reviews and regular half-termly monitoring meetings. Links across the SEWC are developing to support the sharing of best practice in ensuring that the needs of all CLA pupils, including their educational needs, are fully met, including the appointment of a regional CLA coordinator, although the impact of this has yet to be realised.

#### **Elective Home Educated (EHE):**

**At the time of PLASC 2021, there were 89 known EHE pupils in Nursery to Year 11 compared to 70 at the same point in 2020. This is below the mean average for Wales which stands at 180 EHE pupils per local authority.** The rate in Blaenau Gwent equates to 10.4 EHE pupils per 1,000 pupils in Reception to Year 11, compared to 8.3 in 2020. This is above the Welsh average rate of 9.5 per 1,000 pupils (7.0 in 2020). Whilst the rate across Wales increased by 2.5% whilst the rate in Blaenau Gwent increased by only 2.1%, which is slightly below the rate of increase for Wales. **Blaenau Gwent has the 8th highest rate of children per 1,000 that are EHE.**

With regards to the numbers of EHE pupils in SEWC we have the 2nd lowest number of EHE pupils. When compared to our family of local authorities we also have the 2<sup>nd</sup> lowest number of EHE pupils. 90% (93% in 2020) of the EHE cohort had previously been enrolled in schools compared to 87% in Wales (88% in 2020). Blaenau Gwent saw a 3% decrease in this figure whilst the average decrease in Wales was 1.0%.

Of the children that had been previously enrolled at a school, in Blaenau Gwent 90% had been enrolled at a LA-maintained school, 0% were from an independent school within the LA, and 10% had been educated outside of the LA area.

14.8% of pupils became EHE in BG compared to an 11.0% average in Wales. Whilst the trend is the same in BG the figures are still above the Welsh average

When looking at pupils that became EHE across key stages, again Blaenau Gwent's data was not a similar picture to the Wales average. Blaenau Gwent had a significantly higher proportion of children in KS3 (BG 55% compared to Wales 33%).

Moreover, on reviewing the Blaenau Gwent EHE pupils by year group at the time of PLASC the highest proportion of children were in year 10 - with 21.3% of pupils in year 11 compared to the Welsh Average of 13.3%. The gender data BG had nearly an equal proportion of girls and boys that were EHE. In BG 53% were boys compared to 52% across Wales and 47% were girls compared to 48% in Wales.

In Blaenau Gwent 75% of families had received a visit in the last 12 months compared to the Wales average of 53%. This indicates that officers in Blaenau Gwent are taking a pro-active approach to supporting families of EHE. There was a distinctive pattern this year with regards to pupils being withdrawn from schools, which correlated to schools reopening for all pupils.

The number of pupils that became EHE in 19/20 are mainly secondary age pupils (52.1%). Abertillery Learning Community account for the largest number of EHE pupils (13), whilst children moving into the area and Brynmawr Foundation School accounted for the next highest numbers of pupils becoming EHE this year (7 per school). When looking at special educational needs 14 of the 69 pupils had additional learning needs.



Monitoring processes are in line with WG requirements when EHE become known to the Directorate. There are good arrangements in place to support EHE families and good work has been done in this area. Fewer pupils have become home schooled during the current academic year. A high percentage of EHE pupils have previously been enrolled in school indicating that EHE is not their first choice.

#### **Children who are Children Missing Education:**

In 2020/21 there were 37 CME referrals for pupils in Blaenau Gwent that left without a destination school. All of these pupils (except 3) have been located and the CTF has been sent to the receiving school. Of the 3 children not located, 2 have only recently moved and the Education Welfare Service (EWS) are chasing up with the new local authority and the other one has been referred to HMRC – who confirmed that they had a new address for the family.

In 2020/21 there were 22 CME referrals for children that had moved into Blaenau Gwent without a forwarding school. 6 of those children were EHE when they moved into the LA. 4 of the 6 are travellers and visits have been undertaken, whilst the other 2 are due to apply for school. 3 children are still waiting to be admitted into school, as parents delayed completing the in-year transfer form, despite numerous visits. 9 children were placed into school and the referring agency notified. 3 children were in Blaenau Gwent for only a short period of time and were tracked into a new local authority. Legal procedures have commenced for one family as they are not engaging with the admission process.

In June 2021 there were also 170 year-6 pupils that had not applied for secondary school places. Work was done to support these families and ensure applications etc. were completed. There are still 9 children that we are still waiting for confirmation from other local authorities or still supporting with applications.

In June 2021 there were 15 nursery pupils that had not applied to reception. Numerous visits were made and all these children have now completed applications for reception or confirmation has been received from other local authorities to say they have school places. In addition to this there were 137 pupils on the live birth data that had not applied for reception places. All except 31 have now been located. Investigations are currently ongoing for these 31 with other local authorities and then the EWS team will liaise with health and HMRC to see what further information they have.

#### **Children Missing Education: the completed audit revealed the following:**

- There are good tracking processes of CME children in place when the local authority.
- There have been some delays in referrals being received and children being removed without a forwarding destination.
- When CME referrals are made by schools, schools keep the pupils on roll until a new school is identified – this helps the LA in their tracking and hence safeguarding processes.
- Unfortunately, other Councils are currently not making the appropriate referrals into the education service – this hampers our effectiveness and needs to be addressed
- Senior management in the Directorate and Council and the relevant safeguarding boards are now in receipt of CME information.
- The lost pupil database is not used by schools as well as it might be but training was delivered to clerks in July 2019.
- There are improved processes in place with HMRC.
- The last 2 years has seen a steady increase in the number of children missing education. This is partly due to COVID and schools being closed for periods and partly due to Brexit and the Right to Remain scheme.

**Children and Young People that Offend:**

**In 2020/21, there were 71 statutory school age children (compared to 44 in 2019/20) referred to the Youth Offending Service for either preventative or statutory intervention.** 6 of these children were referred twice meaning that there were referrals for 65 individuals (compared to 38 in 2019/20). When looking at the different types of placements for children from Blaenau Gwent 20% of the children (13 children) were attending an alternative provision compared to 36.8% (5 children) in 2019/20.

The most common school was Ebbw Fawr Learning Community and there were 13 children attending the school. Ebbw Fawr Learning Community also had the highest cohort in 2019/20. There were 65 referrals for children in Blaenau Gwent receiving intervention from YOS in the period covered by this report. Of those

- 52.3% (34 children) were offered full time opportunities at the start of their intervention (25 hours) compared to 71% in 2019/20
- 16.9% (11 children) was offered part time opportunities compared to 23.7% in 2019/20
- 3.1% (2 children) had no provision in place as they were electively home educated (EHE)
- 27.7% (18 children) had no hours recorded as schools were closed due to COVID at the start of intervention

The recommended hours for school age children are 25 hours. When looking at the referrals for 65 children for Blaenau Gwent there were 34 children who were offered the full 25 hours of education at the start of YOS intervention compared to 27 in 2019/20. This equates to 52.3%. There were 11 children who were offered less than the recommended hours. 1 was in an alternative provision, 7 were on partial time-tables and 3 children were on tuition. There were 2 children with no provision in place due to being EHE.

When working out the average number of hours offered for the 65 referrals within Blaenau Gwent it equals 22.6 hours, 2.4 hours less than the recommended 25 hours and 1.5 hours more than last year. The average attendance at the start of intervention for the 65 referrals within Blaenau Gwent equals 13 hours, 12 hours less than the recommended 25 hours and 3.3 hours less than in 2019/20. However, it is important to note that attendance across the board is down this year due to school closures as a result of COVID. However, due to Covid-19 the usual performance information is not available.

The average ranges for children who offend are;

	literacy	numeracy	reasoning
primary	82.3 (94.5 in 2019/20)	82 (100 in 2019/20)	81 (113.5 in 2019/20)
secondary	87.1 (94 in 2019/20)	90.4 (107 in 2019/20)	94.9 (104 in 2019/20)

Performance levels are generally higher in secondary aged children, which would be expected. Reasoning data is no longer collected and usual assessments have not been completed as usual so the data is based on the last available data and may not be as current as in previous years. Of the 65 children involved with the Youth Offending Service, 36 had no additional learning needs, 4 were school action, 15 were school action plus and 10 had statements.

**There are good working relationships between the local authority and the Youth Offending Service. Improvements need to be made regarding the number of hours achieved by children and children of school age despite the YOS working closely with partners in both education authorities to enable each child to receive their entitlement of 25+ hours education per week in an appropriate education setting. We need to ensure that all these children have access to 25 hours. The hours attended has decreased and this needs to improve.**

Links with dedicated members of staff in both local authorities have helped to manage issues before they are allowed to develop, thus ensuring more positive outcomes for children.

## ACES

**In January 2018, YOS completed a piece of work on 22 Blaenau Gwent children, who were open to them at the time to look at ACES. Of the 22 children that were open to YOS on the day of the survey 19 had been known to EWS prior to that date (86%).** Of the 22 children that were open to YOS on the day of the survey 15 had been known to EWS prior to their first intervention with YOS (68%), 1 came to the attention of the EWS in the same year (4.5%) and six were not known to EWS prior to their first intervention with YOS (27%)

It is important to note that on the date of the survey it was not the first offence for all of the children. 20 of the 22 children had attendance issues at some point in their school career (90%). The average attendance for this cohort in 2017/18 was 73.8%. 19 of the 22 children had been excluded at some point in their school career (86%). 13 of the 22 children had received exclusions during 2017/18 amounting to 108 days. This equates to an average of 4.9 days' exclusion for each young person.

21 of the 22 children were known to SS prior to offending (95.4%). The average number of referrals was 11.4. Where data is available most pupils made progress and the mean KS3 level has improved when compared to the KS2 level. The GCSE data is not yet available for this cohort or to make comparisons with all LA pupils.

Average attendance is 79% for this cohort of children which is well below the average attendance for the local authority. There are good working relationships between the local authority and the Youth Offending Service.

Improvements continue to be realised in the number of hours achieved by children and children of school age. The YOS works closely with partners in both education authorities to enable each child to receive their entitlement of 25+ hour's education per week in an appropriate education setting. However, we need to ensure that all these children have access to 25 hours. However, despite the hours being increased the attendance of this cohort is well below the average for the local authority. This is a key area for improvement. Links with dedicated members of staff in both local authorities have helped to manage issues before they are allowed to develop, thus ensuring more positive outcomes for children.

**Work is underway in the following areas to improve the quality of the support provided:**

- ETE hours – all children involved with YOS are to have access to 25 hours, not just statutory interventions. This also includes all PEX pupils.
- At KS2, teachers and schools will continue current levels of support for identified pupils
- At KS3 & 4, teachers and schools need to improve levels of support for pupils in line with required improvements for mainstream pupils.
- Schools / the LA will review their current methodology for SEN categorisation in KS4 to ensure pupils receive the required support necessary for them to attain outcomes commensurate with their ability a particular emphasis on improving progress and outcomes of pupils in GCSE Maths.
- Over the next 12 months the YOS has committed to developing and implementing a Literacy & Numeracy Strategy to support this cohort of pupils.
- Ensure that the recommendations made by ESTYN are implemented.

## EPS supporting ALNCos to Build Capacity for ALN

**The EPS has maintained performance in providing high quality support and challenge to schools, with all settings confirming that this had improved their capacity to provide for vulnerable learners. 100% of ALNCos reported that the strategies and interventions provided by the EPS had led to improvements in provision, and subsequent outcomes, for vulnerable learners.**

100% of the ALNCos confirmed that the EPS had helped them to develop their skills and knowledge and, consequently, manage their roles more effectively.

### ELSA

Specifically regarding the ELSA programme, 92% of schools now have at least one trained ELSA. All the ALNCos in these schools state that, where their ELSAs are operating, the programme is making a positive difference to practice and pupil outcomes. Half termly supervision of ELSAs by EPs is rated highly with 100% of ALNCos stating that their ELSAs find it helpful. This is corroborated by mean evaluations from the ELSAs.

### Bespoke training

The EPS has maintained high quality delivery of bespoke training to settings. 100% of ALNCos that had taken advantage of the offer were able to confirm that they can evidence improved provision for learners with ALN, based on the training received on, e.g., Lego club, precision teaching, practicing relational experiences and understanding anxiety. Staff valuations of school-based professional learning for teachers and TAs show that all training events continue to be highly rated. Of a possible maximum rating of 5.0, overall mean ratings of 4.7 for 'appropriate level', 4.7 for 'degree of detail' and 4.9 for 'quality of presentation' were recorded.

### Group consultation

Group consultation has been introduced at ALNCo Forums to train ALNCos in the skill of conducting solution-focused conversations where emphasis is placed on the identification of both barriers and enablers to enhance pupil learning. This was continued during 2019/20 through less frequently as the Forum focus has been on preparation for the ALN reforms. Feedback from participants was positive.

### Further research and training by EPS

ALNCos identified areas in which they would welcome further research by the EPS, illustrated in this word cloud thematic analysis. However, in summary: EPS input was judged to have improved the capacity of staff in all schools. Advice and guidance provided by the EPS is consistently judged to be of high quality by all ALNCos. Outcomes of ALN learners were judged to have improved in all schools following EPS involvement. All schools that received bespoke input from the EPS to develop leadership for ALN, and to provide support for vulnerable learners, reported that the input provided was highly effective. ALNCos identified areas in which they would welcome further research and training – including several areas (SEBD, SpLD, ASD) that have received extensive coverage in recent years, which may be indicative of changes in personnel and / or a shifting landscape of priorities in schools. The ELSA project was rated highly on all criteria by both ALNCos and ELSAs. Some concern was expressed at the lower level of EP provision, due to reduced staffing, but this is further indication of the value attached to the EPS by schools.

**The LA Well-being in Education Strategy and a complementary Good Practice Guide for Schools** shows that this has successfully impacted on improving school practice. Schools are now developing school to school approaches to disseminate and model good practice and have showcased these at Headteacher meetings.

**All schools have access to PASS (Pupil Attitude to School and Self)** This provides high quality, comprehensive and comparative data on aspects of pupil wellbeing. Approximately half of the schools use PASS. There are excellent examples of where PASS has been used very effectively to identify, support and show

sustained improvements for pupil well-being. An area for development is to increase the number of schools using PASS. A behaviour strategy and toolkit with good practice guide is in place. The LA has provided high quality evidence based advice, however, practice in schools is variable. Improving consistency of approach is an identified LA priority for further development.

Robust processes are effective in monitoring and challenging schools to support pupils with behavioural problems to reduce and avoid exclusions. However, reducing exclusions remains a key priority in identified schools. Valuable work is being undertaken to develop a regional approach to reducing exclusions, however, this is in the early stages of development.

Effective referral procedures are in place for EOTAS which are understood by schools. All pupils that have been permanently excluded receive suitable education within 15 days of the exclusion. Most pupils receiving EOTAS have a broad and balanced curriculum.

**All pupils with difficulties in physical or mental health which require access to community tuition** receive as much education as their medical conditions allow. Tailored programmes cater for individual need. Strong links are maintained between pupils and their schools.

**Joint working arrangements between the LA and EAS** have continued to improve through Wider Group meetings. The LA is increasingly effective at identifying underperformance of vulnerable pupils and works well with the EAS to challenge schools to improve. However, joint working between Challenge Advisers and LA officers continues to be an area for development. The Wellbeing data set provides Challenge Advisors with useful data. However, effective use of the data sets is at an early stage and requires further development through better joint working between Challenge Advisers and LA Officers so that there is consistency in challenging schools and promoting evidence based practice.

**Gwent Ethnic Minority Service works very effectively** with schools to raise attainment and progress over time; this is evidenced in the outcomes and progress achieved as set out in IA1. The quality of support and impact evidences that this service is good.

**Effective provision mapping of interventions is variable** this is supported by the outcome and progress profile for those pupils in KS 3 at SA and SA+ which needs to improve. This is an important area for further improvement. The needs of very vulnerable pupils are well supported through embedded practice of the Complex Needs Panel which includes representation from Inclusion, Social Service and Health. Valuable strategic leadership is provided by the multi-agency, multi-disciplinary Corporate Parenting Group.

Through ALN QA, Headteachers are working more effectively with LA officers to monitor provision and plan for building capacity in schools.

**The LA monitors and provides support to schools to help prevent incidents of bullying and a policy is in place but practice in schools is variable.** Robust processes are effective in monitoring and challenging schools to support pupils with behavioural problems to reduce and avoid exclusions. However, reducing exclusions remains a key priority in identified schools. Valuable work is being undertaken to develop a regional approach to reducing exclusions, however, this is in the early stages of development. More positive impact is emerging from the work of the EWS with the Police to provide targeted support and additional challenge to schools regarding how they record race-led incidents.

**The LA meets its statutory duties and provides good quality support for our pupils who are Looked After Children**, promoting race equality, combating racism, preventing and tackling bullying, child protection and safeguarding. The attainment and progress demonstrated of children and young people looked after supports this judgement.

**Systematic support to improve school attendance and coordination** with other teams has maintained good attendance in most Primary and Secondary. Reducing persistent absentees remains a key priority for the County Borough.

**Effective arrangements are in place through the strategic Well-being for Learning Partnership between the LA, other agencies and wider partners to improve provision and outcomes for social and emotional well-being.** The local authority effectively co-ordinates open access and targeted support for vulnerable children and young people. Demonstrable impact has been made through **the Raising Aspirations Group and NEET Practitioner Forum** subgroup to implement the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework. This progressive partnership approach, linking with a key range of providers and partners, has been highly effective in steadily reducing the numbers of young people becoming NEET from 8.7% in 2009 to 1.5% in 2019-20.

**The Youth Service provides a number of high quality** projects providing young people with a variety of opportunities in and out of school, day, night and weekends and ranging from group and social activities to personal support, advice, guidance, advocacy and school based counselling services. The ESF Inspire 2 Achieve and Inspire 2 Work programmes are highly effective in supporting young people. The projects demonstrably impact on young people improving their attendance, attainment or behaviour, as well as overcoming personal barriers.

**There is good use of data through the Early Identification Tool** (part of the YEP Framework in BG) and through tracking of progression in collaboration with Schools, Careers Wales and wider partners which has ensured that young people are enabled to access support to take advantage of opportunities available. The Raising Aspirations Group partnership and practitioner sub groups are effective; helping avoid duplication, identify and address gaps through an annual audit and an online directory and allocating and using resources in the most sustainable way. An enhanced wide range of youth support services and personal support is provided in and out of school based on identified need, through regular mapping of services. Facilitated by the Youth Service, key partners include Families First, Social Services, Communities 4 Work, Tai Calon, Llamau, Employability programmes, Regeneration, Careers Wales, Youth Offending Service, Voluntary Sector partners, Coleg Gwent, WBL providers and other ESF projects.

The Education Welfare Service is continuing to work with partners to improve outcomes for vulnerable learners. There are strong links with Social Services and Youth Justice Services, but there is limited progress with working with health services. All pupils with ALN have access to impartial information, advice and guidance on educational training and employment opportunities through SNAP Cymru, Careers Wales.

**Analysis of EPS work conducted in Early Years** settings shows that this is an area requiring further development. The EPS is currently involved in a 'gate-keeping' role only with the sole purpose of gaining additional funding on transfer from early years' settings to school-based nurseries. This is at odds with the philosophy of the service which promotes a collaborative, person centred, problem-solving approach to supporting the needs of learners. The Education and Social Services Directorates are working together and have identified potential solutions.

**All pupils with ALN have access to impartial information**, advice and guidance on educational training and employment opportunities through SNAP Cymru, Careers Wales, and informal advice is also provided through Youth Service settings and school and Gwent College liaison.

There has been strong progress over the last three years with regards to improving attendance and reducing persistent absenteeism. To enhance this, a vulnerable pupil database has been implemented to track vulnerable learners on a monthly basis. The Education Welfare Service has effective working relationships with Youth Justice Services, Community Safety and the Police to address criminal and anti-social behaviour both in school and in the community.

**The Inclusion Service has significantly improved the monitoring of** exclusions and this has been partially effective in reducing the levels of exclusions. For pupils where there are significant difficulties that need to be discussed at ALN panel or Managed Move Panel, the pastoral plans are scrutinised. To improve the quality and effectiveness of Pastoral Support Plans new guidance has been issued to schools. Effective systems are in place to monitor the use of exclusions, challenge schools where appropriate and to refer pupils to support services. Whilst the monitoring has improved, there is room for further progress in reducing the level of exclusions. Effective processes are in place for monitoring and managing managed moves between schools via the ALN Panel. Blaenau Gwent is fully compliant with legislation ensuring that all excluded pupils are in receipt of appropriate education from day 16.

#### **Support for Pupils Presenting with Special Education Needs:**

**Panel arrangements ensure that timely and appropriate support is provided to enable effective transition from EY to nursery settings.** Guidance and criteria for access to resource bases and special school placements are clear, effective and consistently applied. Processes are supported by effective Panels and annual review arrangements. There is good identification for EY pupils with ALN through robust multi-agency and wider partners' collaboration. Panel arrangements are effective in providing support for EY pupils with ALN. However, developing ALN capacity-building in EY is in the early stages of development.

Effective support is provided to pupils presenting with difficult behaviour and those reluctant to attend school. The River Centre provides this support. However, further developments are needed to develop capacity within mainstream settings to enable pupils to remain in and return back to their host schools.

**A comprehensive range of specialist provision ensures that the needs of pupils with ALN are appropriately met in these settings.** Evidence shows that nearly all pupils make good or better than expected progress in their learning in nearly all resource bases and the quality of provision in nearly all resource bases is good or better. However, there is variability of practice which is being addressed through an LA specialist resource base action plan through the Resource Base Leads' Professional Learning Network.

**Pen-y-Cwm Special School provides very high quality learning experiences** for learners with severe, complex and profound needs, this is evidenced via the school's most recent ESTYN inspection where excellent practice was recognised; nearly all pupils made good progress from their original starting points. The use of highly effective assessment has continued to improve over the last three years and there are now very refined and sophisticated measures in place to assess pupil needs. Small steps progress is excellently captured through the bespoke PLAT (Pen-y-Cwm learning and assessment tracker). Over time the quality and consistency of teaching and learning has continued to improve as evidenced by MER documentation.

**The CLA Coordinator works very successfully** with schools to ensure the ALN needs of CLA pupils are identified and addressed. There are very good links between CLA and Inclusion Officers to ensure that pupils with ALN are supported appropriately. Monitoring arrangements for CLA with statements of SEN and those placed out of county are robust through regular reviews. Links across the SEWC are developing well to ensure the sharing of best practice.

**The quality of transition between settings has been variable.** New arrangements have been introduced to reduce variability and at present it is too early to judge the effectiveness of these developments. The sharing of information for pre-school children is good although effective planning for transition between settings is

inconsistent and variable. Pupil Centred Practice is being piloted in ten schools to develop practice and improve learner engagement to ensure pupils have a say in key decisions that affect them. All pupils with Statements are consulted on how best to support their needs and in specialist provision, pupils are involved in senior staff appointments.

**Work to support parents and carers of** children and young people in Blaenau Gwent with ALN continues to improve. The SEN team ensures that an appropriate level of support to parents and carers through attendance at school reviews, meetings and telephone consultations has maintained a trend of low trend of SENTW appeals. Parents are effectively supported during statutory assessment processes via a range of media; booklets and the Council's website provide clear information as well as face to face interaction with a named contact at each stage. Annual Reviews are completed. Parental Contribution Forms ensure parents and carers' views and concerns are shared. Parents and carers are signposted effectively to other support services, such as Parent Partnership. The EPS effectively provides advice and support to parents and carers. Families First in Blaenau Gwent is fully aware of the priorities for Welsh Government in terms of Supporting Young People and the importance of supporting their education thus preventing young people from becoming NEET's and thereby working towards their overall wellbeing. The current programme is fully compliant with the delivery specifications as set out by Welsh Government and it measures its outcomes its data monitoring and quarterly reporting recommendations.

There is variable school practice regarding the provision of a graduated response to meeting the needs of pupils with ALN, particularly in KS3 for those pupils at SA and SA+. Excellent practice has been identified in a few schools and the mechanisms for sharing this good practice through school to school work is developing. A few schools use assessment data exceptionally well which is then used very effectively to inform teaching and learning for pupils with ALN. However, practice is variable with a few schools needing more intensive support to improve.

**Leadership for ALN is excellent in some schools. However, practice is variable and the mechanisms for sharing good practice through school to school mechanisms requires further development.** Wider Group minutes and previously Wider SIILT minutes show that provision and leadership for ALN has been improved over time in schools where targeted support has been provided. However, the LA and EAS need work more closely to: support schools in improving analysis of pupils with SEN who perform below expected levels to ensure that all pupils show good progress in line with their ability from their individual baselines; analyse the quality of targeted interventions and jointly promote those that are evidence-based in terms of effectiveness and value for money; and to improve distributed leadership for ALN in schools.

**SEBD provision** for FP and KS2 is improving with the development of FP/KS2 provision. The River Centre has supported resource base provisions with Team Teach training and bespoke support. Provision for SEBD pupils at Key stages 3 and 4 is developing but more work is needed to secure good progress and higher attainment, particularly at the end of KS 4. Provision for EOTAS pupils has improved through enhanced community tuition provision.

**The ALN service has been developed so that it can support building capacity across the authority.** Target setting arrangements at individual pupil level are firmly established and continuing to improve though Challenge Adviser work in schools. ALN services are also beginning to develop their use of pupil data to target interventions and challenge schools. Monitoring and tracking of school interventions through an electronic provision mapping tool is currently being implemented, though this is at too early a stage to impact on practice across all schools.

Arrangements for identification, planning and support for pre-school children with complex needs are robust and effective. Good transition planning ensures that information is available to schools upon transition and appropriate support is in place in the vast majority of cases.



**Guidance and criteria for access to resource bases** and the special schools is clear and effective, developed in partnership with Heads. Processes are supported by effective Panels and annual review arrangements. The LA has effective arrangements to ensure that pupils can access support and specialist resource base provision without the need for a Statement of SEN. Schools have clear understanding of procedures for accessing support from LA and consortium services. Commissioned services have clear and agreed criteria for access.

Allocation of funding to schools by formula has provided flexibility for Headteachers and senior school leaders to maximise the benefit of funding for individual pupils.

All pupils with difficulties in physical or mental health, (and therefore requiring access to community tuition) receive as much education as possible in the River Centre. Tailored programmes are provided to cater for individual need. The quality of provision is improving significantly from a low base and there are strong links maintained between pupils and their schools

**There is effective transition support to help pupils with ALN move between settings and stages of learning, supported by clear and improving processes and communications.** Good transition planning for pre-school children ensures that information is available to schools upon transition and appropriate support is in place.

Most pupils with ALN receive impartial information, advice and guidance on educational training and employment opportunities through careers Wales, and informal advice is also provided through Youth Service settings and school and Gwent College liaison. Effective support is provided to pupils presenting with difficult behaviour and those reluctant to attend school in key stages 3 and 4. The quality of provision and support for these pupils has improved significantly from a low base.

At KS2, support for pupils requiring specialist SEBD provision was identified as an area requiring further development. Improved SEBD provision has been established for FP and KS2 which provides for short term and long term pupil needs.

## 2.2 Support for vulnerable learners: - Areas where good progress has been made:

- Progress has been made through the comprehensive ALN provision, but the Inclusion review is on-going;
- Exclusions: Monitoring of pupil level exclusion data by all Inclusion teams has improved and is effective, informing the quality of Officers' work and dialogue with individual schools. The establishment of the Safer Schools Partnership approach is beginning to support improved partnership work which will help reduce exclusions in the longer term. Work is currently focussed on two secondary settings in particular to reduce exclusions.
- A report to consider Pen-y-Cwm capacity was approved by the Executive Committee in the Spring 2021;
- Readiness for the implementation of the ALN reform to support learners presenting ALN is strong;
- ASD provision is in place;

The Inclusion service review is well underway and is being reconfigured to meet the diversity of present need;

- Resource Base provision has improved, particularly for pupils who experience Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD);
- Excellent practice has been secured in Pen-y-Cwm Special School; and
- Estyn judgements in school inspections for care support and guidance largely remain good or better.

Practice to identify pupil progress using matched data (also for specific pupil groups) is now in its second year and is helping to identify where further improvement in provision is needed, for example:

- in KS3 in particular and in identified schools;
- increase the progress rates between KS 3 and KS 4 in English and Maths; and
- to secure improved progress for all vulnerable groups, including eFSM and particularly during and between KS3 and KS4.

## 2.2 Support for vulnerable learners: Areas where further improvement is required:

- The quality and effectiveness of support to increase attainment of young pupils in the early years and at the end of the Foundation Phase (particularly eFSM but not solely) needs to improve so that progress rates going forward for these learners is accelerated significantly.
- The quality and effectiveness of support provided for all vulnerable learners needs to improve so that attainment and progress increases significantly both during and between KS3 and 4. The quality of provision and effectiveness of leadership and management of inclusion, in these Key Stages, needs to improve, particularly in identified schools and settings, and for the specific groups in this report.
- Revolving Door Approach: there needs to be effective support in the River Centre provided to pupils presenting with difficult behaviour and those reluctant to attend school. Further developments are needed to develop capacity within mainstream settings to enable pupils to remain in, and return back to their host schools, particularly for KS3 pupils. There is a pre-warning notice letter in place for the school and a service agreement is required between the River Centre and the Council to formalise the arrangements.
- ALN: the LA and EAS need to work more closely to support schools in improving analysis of pupils with SEN who perform below expected levels to ensure that all pupils show good progress in line with their ability from their individual baselines, particularly for those pupils in KS3 at SA and SA +level. Such analyses are to include the impact of targeted interventions
- ALN in Early Years: Panel arrangements are effective in providing support for EY pupils with ALN. However, developing ALN capacity-building in EY is in the early stages of development and needs to be accelerated.
- EHE practice for those on the cusp of EHE needs to be more targeted. The Action Plan needs to be fully implemented.
- CME: The local authority needs to continue to monitor CME practices and address any gaps as they arise and embed the agreed processes and ensure that regular reporting continues.
- Young People who offend: all children involved with YOS to have access to 25 hours of education. At KS3 and 4, teachers and schools need to improve levels of support for pupils in line with required improvements for mainstream pupils. Schools and the LA will review their current methodology for SEN categorisation in KS4 to ensure pupils receive the required support necessary for them to attain outcomes
- aligned to their ability, with a particular emphasis on improving progress and outcomes of pupils in GCSE maths. Ensure the YOS fully implement their Literacy & Numeracy Strategy. Ensure that the recommendations made by ESTYN via their thematic report are fully implemented.
- EPS Service: to secure better blended working with Children's Services to explore how the EPS can work more effectively within Early Years settings. Work with colleagues in the wider Inclusion team and regionally to continue to provide support and challenge for schools in line with the ALNET Act. In particular, this will need to look at developing ALNCos' role to become more strategic, while also building the skills of the wider workforce to meet the needs of vulnerable learners. Work to develop more consistent practice within and between schools around behaviour management, in its widest sense, to include a re-focus on the high quality research undertaken by the EPS around SEBD, literacy and assessment

as well as developing schools' understanding of the ACEs agenda (with awareness training provided via EAS on a cluster-basis) and further attention to schools supporting the work of their ELSAs.

- Implement the Pen-y-Cwm capacity plans to meet the increasing demand for places.

### 2.3 Other Education Support Services

**BG Youth Services provide effective information, support and learning opportunities for young people aged 11-25 and also supports young people through earlier transitions from 9 years old, based on a voluntary relationship between the young person and youth worker. In addition, the Youth Service co-ordinates the 11-18 Counselling Service (statutory), the extended 18-25 Counselling Service and the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (YEPF), which aims to reduce the numbers of young people who become NEET (not in Education, Employment or Training) up to the age of 25 through a partnership approach. The partnership now includes a focus on Youth Homelessness and Wellbeing.**

Open Access Youth Services include D of E (Duke of Edinburgh), Detached and Outreach, Youth Information Service and Youth Info Champs, Young Reps Volunteering programme, Youth Ambassadors (YAMs), Health and Wellbeing workshops and training, Youth Clubs, Open for Youth Nights, school holiday programmes and the 11-25 Counselling Service.

Targeted Youth Services include Inspire to Achieve 11-16, Inspire to Work 16-24, Youth and Community Team (Youth Homelessness and Mental Health) and the Positive Futures anti-social behaviour programme.

**All the work of the Youth Service is preventative in nature.** At a very basic level, the support and opportunities can help young people to meet with each other and with trusted adults, feel part of their community which can prevent low levels of mental health, prevent incidents of anti-social behaviour and help young people become active citizens. Both Inspire programmes are preventative in their approach. Inspire 2 Achieve exist to help 'prevent' young people from becoming NEET by focusing on their wellbeing, attendance, behaviour and attainment. Inspire 2 Work exists to 'prevent' young people from developing ingrained negative behaviours and lifestyles into their future.

**Since March 2020, the Youth Service has supported the response to COVID-19 effectively.** Although school based youth workers and counsellors returned to buildings in September, initially, the service refocussed to identify and support the most vulnerable young people known to the Youth Service, Education and schools. Since March 2020, the service supported 600 11-16 year olds and 250 16-25 year olds and from March to July made weekly contact. Initially the focus was supporting young people around the challenges they faced linked to the pandemic, including delivering essentials such as food, toiletries, wellbeing packs, supporting issues around lack of money, losing employment and facing eviction. Youth workers supported young people to find accommodation and the local authority placed some young people who would not usually be eligible to access support in bed and breakfast accommodation to try to ensure that they had a safe place to live. Youth workers also helped young people to apply for financial support.

Over time, the emergency response changed to support young people around their wellbeing. Online activities were developed such as music, cooking and art club, and face to face activities included wellbeing walks, supporting attendance at college and job interviews. The Counselling Service has continued throughout, providing online sessions, meeting young people outside, in school and the youth centre. A full summer programme was provided including a mixture of online and face to face activities. Throughout, youth club staff have been redeployed to provide outreach and the detached team have continued to work in the evenings, responding at times to requests from the Police and community members. This has been an opportunity to keep young people informed about the restrictions, any changes and what that means for them. Between April 2020 and December 2020, 24 referrals (MARFS) were made to Social Services.

**Youth Engagement and Progression Framework:**

**The Youth Service co-ordinates the Welsh Government's 'Youth Engagement and Progression Framework' through a strategic multi-agency partnership the Raising Aspirations Group (RAG). The partnership is mature and effective and continues to address all 6 key areas of the framework.** This includes using the Early Identification Tool (7th year), updating the provision map (7th year), updating the online directory of support (7th year), further developing the 'lead worker' role and further refining the tracking and support of young people. All areas of the Blaenau Gwent action plan are developing well and either met or are on track.

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

**As a result of this co-ordinated approach with partners, there has been a steady reduction of numbers of young people becoming NEET when they leave school, reaching 1.5% (9 young people) in 2019.** This was a decrease of 2 young people from the previous year, and is in line with the lowest figure ever achieved and below the Welsh average of 1.7%. Considering the context of the past year, it is extremely positive that so many young people transitioned successfully and maintained their post 16 placement.

The Youth Service reports to a number of external funders and provides an annual audit return to Welsh Government. The Raising Aspirations Group monitors the progress of the local delivery of the two Inspire programmes. A performance monitoring report is presented annually to Education Scrutiny to scrutinise the Youth Service performance. Annual reports and evaluation reports are also provided to Education DMT. Feedback is provided to young people on a regular basis.

**The Education Transformation (ET) team is responsible for the following areas with the aim of improving the delivery of and access to education throughout Blaenau Gwent; ultimately, securing higher standards of success and achievement among the pupil and emerging adult population:**

- School Admissions and Appeals
- The Planning of School Places
- Education Facilities Management
- 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme Delivery along with Education Projects and Programmes
- School Organisation and Associated Project Implementation/ Delivery
- The Welsh in Education Strategic Plan
- The ICT Infrastructure and Connectivity Project
- Accessibility and Medical Needs Strategy, Policy Development, Procedures and Forums
- Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy, Procedures and Appeal

**School Admissions – 2020/21 Admissions Round Analysis (Implementation during the 2019/20 academic session)**

**The Admissions team have successfully implemented the School Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education 2020/21, which is evidenced by the following self-assessment:**

**100% of applications were processed within 48 hours and 100% of standard in-year transfer requests were processed within 15 days of receipt in accordance with the WG School Admissions Code (2013) and Blaenau Gwent's School Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education.**

The primary reason for in-year transfer has been inward migration of families into the Blaenau Gwent area, with an upward trend in inward migration seen between 2016 and 2019. The transfer rate decreased slightly due to the COVID-19 pandemic to **229 in 2019/20 (151 primary transfers, 78 secondary transfers)**. The primary reason for in-year transfer has been inward migration of families into the Blaenau Gwent area.

There were 3 appeals held for the reception year group during the summer period 2020, which is less than the number of appeals held in 2019. All 3 appeals were upheld in favour of the Council. The numbers of in-time applications received for pupils who applied for a school place during the 2020/21 admission round, increased slightly for nursery and reception but decreased for secondary when compared to 2019/20, this was due to the birth rate for the year 7 cohort being lower. Please refer to Figure 1 for the in-time percentage comparisons:

Figure 1: In-time Application (%) for each admission round

Percentage of In-time Applications 2018/19	Percentage of In-time Applications 2019/20	Percentage of In-time Applications 2020/21
Nursery – 58%	Nursery – 51%	Nursery – 60%
Reception – 79%	Reception – 74%	Reception – 75%
Secondary – 71%	Secondary – 89%	Secondary – 79%

**The Council have been able to sustain 100% of parental first preferences for a 4-year period in respect of both nursery and secondary place allocation, and 99% of first preferences were met for the reception year group (please refer to Figure 2 below for more information).** This is attributable to the effective monitoring and management of school capacities and pupil places, along with the continued surplus place reduction. First preferences met for late applications are also extremely high due to effective pupil place management processes

Figure 2: First Preferences Met %

% of First Preferences Met for In-time Applications 2017/18	% of First Preferences Met for In-time Applications 2018/19	% of First Preferences Met for In-time Applications 2019/20	% of First Preferences Met for In-time Applications 2020/21
Nursery – 100%	Nursery – 100%	Nursery – 100%	Nursery – 100%
Reception – 99%	Reception – 99%	Reception – 99%	Reception – 99%

Secondary – 100%	Secondary – 100%	Secondary – 100%	Secondary – 100%
<b>% of First Preferences Met for Late Applications 2017/18</b>	<b>% of First Preferences Met for Late Applications 2018/19</b>	<b>% of First Preferences Met for Late Applications 2019/20</b>	<b>% of First Preferences Met for Late Applications 2020/21</b>
Nursery – 100%	Nursery – 100%	Nursery – 99%	Nursery – 100%
Reception – 97%	Reception – 96%	Reception – 99%	Reception – 100%
Secondary – 100%	Secondary – 100%	Secondary – 100%	Secondary – 100%

The pilot phase of on-line admission arrangements was launched on September 1<sup>st</sup> 2016. Online applications have increased overall over the course of the last 4 academic sessions, as detailed below:

#### 2017/18

- 158 out of a possible 976 applications received online for nursery;
- 6 out of a possible 796 applications received online for reception; and,
- 16 out of a possible 685 application received online for secondary.

#### 2018/19

- 94 out of a possible 705 applications received online for nursery;
- 93 out of a possible 586 applications received online for reception; and,
- 58 out of a possible 770 application received online for secondary.

#### 2019/20

- 205 out of a possible 659 applications received online for nursery;
- 186 out of a possible 676 applications received online for reception; and,
- 161 out of a possible 654 application received online for secondary.

#### 2020/21

- 248 out of a possible 519 applications received online for nursery;
- 216 out of a possible 559 applications received online for reception; and,
- 185 out of a possible 426 applications received online for secondary.

**The Admissions Policy for 2021/22 was also consulted upon and published in line with the Welsh Government's deadline (15<sup>th</sup> April 2020 – the year preceding the academic session to which the policy applies).**

The Admissions Forum met 3 times over the last year. The Forum has sustained a good level of attendance at each meeting, working closely with the Education Transformation team in order to:

- improve school and Council awareness and partnership approaches in respect of the implementation and monitoring of the admissions round;
- improve tracking processes from live birth to secondary education (whilst ensuring alignment with Inclusion);
- address issues i.e. ensure that when in-year transfers are allocated a place a start date is offered within 10 days;
- explore a wider ranging data set i.e. Flying Start, placement outside of the chronological year group, home tuition and attendance data etc. Ensuring that there is a holistic approach to the management of pupil places; and,
- monitor the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic upon admissions
- work towards implementation of the new Capita One Online system.

### **Planning of School Places**

Councils have a duty to manage, monitor, review and plan pupil places on an annual basis in line with:

- Welsh Government's Measuring the Capacity of Schools in Wales Guidance (2011)
- Welsh Government School Admission and Admission Appeals Code's (2013)
- Welsh Government School Organisation Code (2013)

Capacity calculations were determined for each of the schools in October 2018, which informed the final admission numbers for the Blaenau Gwent School Admissions Policy 2020/21. Projections are calculated for a 5-year period for primary and for a 7-year period for secondary schools. Pupil projection accuracy has improved considerably over the last 3 years, with 100 % of primary and 98% of secondary projections confirmed to be accurate during the 2019/20, 2018/19 and 2017/18 academic sessions; in comparison to 97% for primary 94% for secondary during the 2016/17 academic session.

**Between January 2019 and January 2020 the percentage of surplus places within primary has seen a slight increase from 11% in Jan 2019 to 12% in January 2020 due to in-year transfers out of borough; however, the 19% surplus for secondary in January 2019 has decreased to 16%. Surplus places in both the primary and secondary sector are projected to decrease further over the next 2 years, taking the primary percentage to 9% and secondary to 11%, by the 2023/24 academic year – with the overall combined projected status at 10%.**

**The School Organisation Policy (2017) set a target of reducing surplus places to 15% by 2020 across the County Borough;** by which time the primary sector is projected to have 10% and the secondary sector 15% surplus places. The Education Transformation team targeted the following schools whereby the percentage was 15% or over, in line with the delivery of surplus place reduction action plans during the 2019/2020 academic session:

- Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg – Admission number reduced from 258 to 241 resulting in the surplus % reducing from 17% in 18/19 to 13% in 2019/20
- Ebbw Fawr Learning Community, Primary Phase - Admission number reduced from 360 to 324 the surplus % reducing remained at 25%, with further reduction required for 20/21

The Education Transformation team's strategy for the 2019/20 academic session is to work on the development of surplus places reduction action plans with the following schools who are projected (as at January 2020) to have over 15% surplus between 2020 and 2023:

- St Illtyd's Primary School currently have 12% surplus in 2019/20 but projected to rise to 19% in 2023/24
- St Marys Roman Catholic Primary School currently have 18% surplus in 2019/20 but projected to rise to 19% in 2023/24
- Cwm Primary School currently have 22% surplus in 2019/20 but projected to rise to 32% in 2024/25

Glyncoed Primary School are projected to have sufficiency issues between 2022 and 2023 this will be addressed via the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme, whereby sufficient capacity will be built in to accommodate pupil projections and demand. There is also a projected sufficiency issue in 2023 (- % of the pupil population or 3 pupils) for Coed y Garn Primary School, which can be addressed by increasing the capacity of the school, which has been reduced in previous years. In addition, Abertillery Learning Community Secondary Campus, is projected to have sufficiency issues in 2025/26 (- 3% of the pupil population or 21 pupils), which can also be addressed via the annual assessment of school capacity as above.

Over the last academic session, the team have submitted the following Section 106 requests for developer contributions, in-line with securing increased capacity in schools within the development area:

- Ebbw Fawr Valley – 1 for primary provision
- Ebbw Fach valley – 1 for secondary provision
- Tredegar Sirhowy Valley – 1 for primary and 1 for secondary provision

**During the last 4 years there has been a considerable reduction in surplus places within the primary sector. The secondary sector has fluctuated in line with transfers out of borough in particular. The secondary sector has remained below 20% surplus places for the last 4 years (Please refer to Figure 4 ).**

**Figure 4– Blaenau Gwent Surplus Place Percentage Comparisons**

Year	% Surplus Places -Primary Sector	% Surplus Places Secondary Sector
2011/12	28.7	19
2012/13	28.1	19.7
2013/14	25.9	20.2
2014/15	17.5	18.3
2015/16	18	20
2016/17	16	17
2017/18	14	19
2018/19	11	19
2019/20	12	16



Figure 5 (below) sets out the comparative percentages of surplus places across the family of Local Authorities, with the last data set being 2018/19. **Blaenau Gwent has joint second lowest number of surplus places within secondary, and the second lowest within primary in 2018/19.**

The Council are presently awaiting the Family of Local Authority and All Wales comparative data sets for the 2019/20 academic sessions, which are scheduled for release in autumn 2021.

**Figure 5 – Family of LA Status (based on percentage)**

Local Authority Family	Primary	Secondary
Blaenau Gwent	13.7%	18.50%
Caerphilly	14.8%	20.60%
Merthyr Tydfil	9.4%	14.90%
Neath Port Talbot	17.9%	18.50%
Rhondda Cynon Taff	16.20%	23.90%

#### **All Wales Position**

The January 2018/19 surplus places comparative data for Wales Blaenau Gwent's position was:

- 13<sup>th</sup> (out of 22 Local Authorities) for primary;
- 10<sup>th</sup> (out of 22) for secondary; and,
- 11<sup>th</sup> (out of 22 Local Authorities) in terms of the combined primary and secondary position.

#### **Education Facilities Management**

##### **Maintenance, Repair and Planned Works**

The Red Book Guidance associated with the repair and maintenance of Blaenau Gwent schools has been in existence since October 1999, in response to the funding provisions of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and Local Authority Financial Scheme Regulations 1998. Education Transformation and Technical Services undertook a review of the Division of Responsibilities Guidance and TE100 procedure in the spring-term of 2019, with the updated version circulated among schools for implementation from September 2019.

442 TE100's were received between September 2019 and August 2020, 100% of which were acknowledged and received a response within the specified timeframe. 94% (415) of the 629 TE100 requests have been completed with remaining 6% scheduled for completion within the summer and autumn terms 2019. Delays to resolution have been due to the following factors:

- budgetary issues in line with identified costs;
- securing contractors to undertake the work;
- the capacity of Technical Services to assess the extent of repair/ maintenance work and associated costs;
- works to be undertaken outside of school operation; and
- forms submitted at the end of term, when schools are scheduled to be closed.

### **Facilities Review**

The facilities review process and pro-forma were updated in line with lessons learned from 2018/19 and implemented alongside surplus place, capacity and school plan/treadmill reviews in the autumn-term 2019. In addition, bi-monthly monitoring meetings have taken place in order to actively monitor school facilities action plans. Half termly meetings took with all schools where all outstanding TE100's, H&S and FRA actions were discussed, and a timeline agreed for resolution agreed.

### **Health and Safety and Fire Risk Assessment**

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005; places a duty on the Council to monitor compliance and management of health and safety and fire risk assessment related matters in school's/education buildings. The Education Transformation team monitor accidents and incidents, action plans and delivery timeframes with both schools and Technical Services. The team also work with Corporate Health and Safety Colleagues to address policy and guidance issues in schools i.e. adverse weather.

### **School Trips and Visits – Evolve**

All schools within Blaenau Gwent are now using EVOLVE and have a full appreciation in terms of what is expected of them with regards to trips, visits and activities. The benefits of EVOLVE and its continued use are as follows:

- Best practice – the system is used by the majority of Welsh Council's, schools and academy groups throughout the U.K.
- Consistent approach - all schools are following the same procedures.
- Regular monitoring - EVOLVE provides access to all planning documentation which is tracked and monitored.
- Council oversight - providing the opportunity for regular reports, monitoring etc. by Councils to ensure compliance and provide a level of assurance.
- Ensures compliance – the system offers monthly and termly statistical reports, with schools being monitored and advised of any concerns.
- There is a clear audit trail in the event of an incident/accident.
- All visit information is retained in the medium to long-term on an independent server.
- Training and professional support is provided and can be accessed via a specialist Outdoor Adviser, who liaises with the Council.
- The Council and schools have continued access to Welsh and U.K. National guidance and support via Outdoor Education Advisers Panel

The establishment visit data demonstrates that all schools have used EVOLVE over the last year, with 13 being the minimum number of visits recorded. As is the case throughout Wales, there are considerable variations in the number of visits added by schools. Even those schools with a poor track record of use are now increasingly utilising the system, adding a greater number of visits.

Educational Visits Coordinator (EVC) training courses are held annually and ad hoc training is offered to schools as requested. Figures 5 and 6 contain a summary of the educational visits data for 2019/20:

**Figure 6: 2019/20 Statistical Summary**

Summary of Approved and Processed Visits During the 2019/20 Academic Session	Statistical Summary
Total number of visits	2315
Total number of students	46164
Total number of days	2381
Total number of participant days	48575

**Figure 7: 2019/20 Breakdown by Visit Type**

	Abroad	Residential	Adventurous (External)	Adventurous (Own staff)	Other	Onsite
<b>Total no. of visits</b>	4	29	67	16	2232	5
<b>Total no. of establishments</b>	4	15	16	2	29	3
<b>Total no. of students</b>	207	897	1977	755	43786	61
<b>Total no. of days</b>	25	95	114	17	2232	5

#### **School Building Condition and Suitability**

Welsh Government has requested that Council's use Faithful+Gould to undertake school building condition assessments. F+G utilise the AMP methodology to determine an overall school condition grade. **The 2019/20 position for school building condition and suitability continues to improve in line with figure 8 data overleaf:**

**Figure 8 – Overall Building Condition and Suitability Ratings**

	A	B	B/C	C	D
<b>Primary (19 Schools – 19 buildings)</b>					
<b>Condition</b>	0	11	0	7	1
<b>Suitability</b>	3	7	9	0	0
<b>Secondary (2 schools – 2 buildings)</b>					
<b>Condition</b>	0	1	0	1	0
<b>Suitability</b>	0	1	0	1	0
<b>Middle (2 schools - 6 buildings)</b>					
<b>Condition</b>	4	1	0	1	0
<b>Suitability</b>	4	1	0	1	0
<b>Special (2 schools- 4 buildings)</b>					
<b>Condition</b>	1	1	0	2	0
<b>Suitability</b>	1	2	0	1	0

The Council are reviewing the criteria and methodology linked to suitability assessments. **There is only one school building categorised as a ‘D’ (Glyncoed Primary School) within the school estate, which is programmed for replacement in 2023.**

#### **Emergency Planning**

**The ET team have secure emergency planning procedures in place, including a Severe Weather Policy and associated procedures.** The ET team dealt with school closure and facilities management in line with the Emergency Response Team (ERT) throughout 2019/20. 0 closure day took place in the 2019/20 due to severe weather, however all schools closed at the end of March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. **Education has secure emergency planning procedures in place, which have been tested extensively during COVID and are deemed to be effective.**

### **Schools Repurposing and COVID-19 Emergency Response**

In mid-March 2020, the Local Authority successfully developed and led on the emergency planning arrangements and repurposing of schools aligned to the COVID-19 pandemic. The LA in partnership with its schools successfully established 7 re-purposed childcare hubs to support childcare for the children of key workers and vulnerable pupils. Throughout the emergency response period, the LA has provided childcare for over 500 critical workers via school childcare hubs and/or private childcare provision. 377 children accessed a key worker childcare place at a school hub between March and early July 2020. Effective management and monitoring processes were established via a dedicated Schools Repurposing Planning Group, childcare hub guidance was developed, issued and monitored along with emergent issues and planning aligned to the reopening of schools in the summer-term 2020. The Youth Service have supported over 500 young people

### **Free School Meals**

**The LA quickly and effectively responded in order to fulfil their duty in establishing provision for free school meal eligible pupils during the school closures from March 2020.** In the first instance, a packed lunch collection/delivery process was established. This then progressed to a weekly meal box delivery scheme managed by the catering department. It was then determined that the Council would implement a direct payment method and associated application process, which was run alongside the meal box delivery until September 2020 when the meal box provision ended. The FSM direct payments were administered directly to eligible families to support them during any school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic, any self-isolation periods for the pupils and the school holiday periods. The FSM direct payments continue to be active during self-isolation periods and school holiday periods, families can apply via the online application form which is regularly reviewed and re-opened for newly eligible families. Applications are subjected to an eligibility and quality checks, once the eligibility has been confirmed the applicant is set up as a Blaenau Gwent creditor, the payments are then sent made via the weekly BACS schedule. The number of pupils entitled to and claiming the FSM direct payments has grown significantly over the last 12 months from approx. 1,847 pupils to the current 2,550 pupils, this equates to 89% of the total eligible pupils within the authority. The Education Transformation team pick up all queries relating to the payments, relevant departments are then consulted as required. Queries can range from a change of bank details for a claimant, to a change in pupil's residency.

### **School Reopening 2020/21**

#### **Pupil and Family Engagement**

An initial parent survey was undertaken on behalf of all BG schools. Responses were received for 4,221 (out of a possible 8,134) children, out of which the parents of 2,219 or (53%) stated that they intended to send their child/children back to school during the summer term. However, the remaining 2,002 or (47%) parents indicated that they did not intend on sending their child/children back to school during the summer term. A follow up survey was undertaken by each school based upon further communications provided to parents, in which schools requested that parents confirm their intentions based upon updated information on school operation etc. In order to oversee the reopening of schools in Blaenau Gwent, Education established two Executive School Planning Groups - one for the secondary sector inclusive of special schools, along with one for primary sector inclusive of Welsh-medium provision. The aim of these groups was and continues to be the development of a common framework and key principles within which the reopening of schools could take place. In addition, a Local Authority Transition Group was established with representation from key services including Education, Organisational Development, Health and Safety, Property Services, Insurance, Environmental Health, Social Services etc. The purpose of this group was to develop and oversee a transition plan which met the key support service requirements associated with the reopening of schools.

#### **Facilities, Health & Safety**

Technical facilities assessments were undertaken in preparation for reopening to assess physical works and adaptations i.e. maintenance and ventilation requirements etc. Work was then programmed accordingly. In addition, a comprehensive water testing, management and mitigation programme was established and monitored by

Education, Property Services, Health & Safety and Environmental Health. Effective monitoring and control measures were employed, meaning that 25 out of 29 school sites were able to reopen in week 1, with all 29 school sites operational by the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of the summer-term.

Capacity assessments and facilities planning sessions were programmed and facilitated by Education in partnership with headteachers and relevant school staff, on an individual basis. This process was used in order to inform the operational plans for each school including: maximum pupil numbers and grouping; operational layout, set-up and systems i.e. one way; room usage; decant and resource management requirements. Guidance was provided to schools regarding the use of PPE in general, for first aid, medical, intimate care and other purposes. PPE and other resource requirements i.e. signage, spill kits etc. were audited on a school by school basis. Plans were established and schools were provisioned for accordingly.

A cleaning service specification and associated guidance were produced and shared with schools. Individual cleaning plans were then established for each school, which are being monitored and will be used in order to inform future resource planning. It was agreed that catering would not be provided within school settings from week commencing 29<sup>th</sup> June 2020 and for the remainder of the summer-term. Catering staff were then redeployed into the cleaning service to increase capacity and resilience. A reopening risk assessment template, guidance and example were produced and shared with headteachers. These documents were then completed by school leaders and validated by the Local Authority. All risk assessments were deemed to be suitable and sufficient.

### **School Improvement**

**Throughout each phase of the pandemic the range of support to schools has flexed in order to respond to emerging needs.** The LA has effectively engaged the EAS, our commissioned school improvement service throughout this time has worked closely with the LA, school leaders, staff and governors to support these needs. Indeed, the Principal Challenge Adviser of the EAS is now a key member of the Executive groups that oversee the planning for the reopening of schools.

Moving forward and as we move to the next phase of the recovery of education, schools have and will continue to be supported through a range of strategies and key to this is the one stop shop playlist known as “supporting our schools”. This playlist has been and will continue to be a key mechanism of communication. However, as the return progresses support will continue to be tailored to meet the emerging needs.

Below is a high-level summary of the extensive work that is ongoing:

- Providing timely communication and access to virtual networks for school settings and governors
- Supporting adaptive and innovative leadership to manage change
- Providing bespoke leadership support to schools and settings with a focus on self-evaluation, quality assuring current provision and planning for return
- Providing wellbeing resources and guidance materials
- To continue to provide a range of professional learning that meets the needs of the entire workforce (and governors) over the next academic year
- Access to advice support and guidance to support curriculum for Wales
- Ensuring that the commissioned improvement services work is continually aligned to the meet the needs of schools

### **Home to School Transport**

Education determined that transport provision would be sought and agreed, in consideration of availability and safe operation. However, the primary message to parents was that, where possible, parents should transport/walk their child to school. In addition, it was determined that transport would not be provided for school childcare hub children and young people, in order to maximise the offer and safety of provision for those who need it most. It was expected that parents will continue to facilitate this as has been the case throughout the repurposing process.

Pupils from 15 schools within Blaenau Gwent are currently eligible for transport in line with the BG policy, along with pupils from 12 schools/specialist education facilities outside of the County Borough. The Council was able to fully address the transport requirements identified by schools within and outside of the borough.

### **Outcomes**

26 out of 29 school sites were operational in the first week of the summer-term, with all 29 operational by the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of the summer-term. The preparatory work undertaken by schools in close working partnership with the Local Authority, resulted in 42% of the pupil population or 3,393 pupil's returning to the 26 operational school sites within the first week. All 29 school sites were fully operational as of Monday 13<sup>th</sup> July 2020, with 48% of 3,941 pupils returning to school in the final week of the summer-term. School childcare hub provision was consistently delivered between March and July 2020 with approximately 600 attendees per/week during the summer-term, and approximately 300 vulnerable learners in attendance at both school and hub provision during the summer-term.

### **Accessibility and Medical Needs**

The Blaenau Gwent Accessibility Strategy 2017-2020 and associated action plan are scheduled for review and consultation over the next year. An Accessibility Forum was developed in 2018, in order to coordinate a review of both the strategy and action plan, whilst also ensuring that there are effective accessibility identification and management processes in place aligned to delivery. The Forum was active between 2017 and early 2020, when the frequency of meetings declined, due to resource-based pressures associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the action plan has been continually monitored by Education throughout the course of the pandemic. In addition, accessibility issues have and continue to be identified, managed and monitored on a case by case basis.

### **Strong progress was made against the Strategy and associated action between 2017 and 2021, as follows:**

- Blaenau Gwent Council were recognised by the Children's Commissioner for Wales in 2018, as being one of the only Councils in Wales to have a published Accessibility Strategy and action plan.
- The Forum was established to oversee implementation of key strategic priorities, along with delivery and monitoring of the action plan, whilst also ensuring due regard was given to related policy and legislative developments.
- A facilities review process has been established and completed with all Blaenau Gwent schools, in order to facilitate development, publication and action planning processes on a school-by-school basis. This is also being rolled out to wider education, alternative and informal learning settings/facilities. The facilities management aspect of the Education Transformation team work closely with Technical Services, who have and continue to embed accessibility into the facilities review, maintenance, condition and suitability processes.
- All Blaenau Gwent School have Accessibility Plans in place, which were last reviewed during the 2019/20 academic session.
- Pupil accessibility needs are identified pre-admission, monitored, managed and resourced as required. There have been three cases over the course of the 2020/21 academic year, whereby physical works have been undertaken and schools supported to meet the needs of the pupils in question.
- The Blaenau Gwent school maintenance strategy and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools programme have and continue to address accessibility issues to the greatest degree possible throughout the school estate. There are two school settings within Blaenau Gwent which are not fully accessible. However, depending on the needs of the child or young person additional adaptations, work and provision may be required within those setting that are considered to be accessible.
- Staff training programmes have been developed and delivered, with learning incorporated into future programmes to increase awareness, knowledge, experience, understanding and management of accessibility issues.
- A Complex and Medical Needs group has been established with representation from Health, Education, Community Services, Health and Safety and Social Services (along with other relevant partners as determined in line with each case), to address individual cases whereby complex needs prevent pupils from attending their chosen/preferred school. Thus far five cases have been resolved, one of which was subject to an independent equality impact assessment.

- An early identification process is in development, to ensure that the Council is able to manage accessibility issues technically, financially and educationally, prior to pupils reaching statutory school age.

**A fundamental review of the school estate and associated accessibility plans is required. In order to undertake this review, Education plan to develop a 3 to 5-year programme of detailed accessibility audits, starting with the oldest settings and those with the lowest condition and suitability ratings.** In conjunction with this, Education will work with key partners and professionals including the Forum, to fundamentally review the Accessibility Strategy over the course of the 2021/22 academic session, for adoption in the summer 2022, and implementation from September 2022. The Education plan to develop a Healthcare Needs Sub-group of the Accessibility Forum, to work on the development of localised operational guidance in line with the aforementioned policy, including early identification and management processes. The guidance will cover both the administration of medicines and medical needs.

### **Home to School and Post 16 Transport**

Local Authorities have a duty to publish their home to school and post 16 transport policies in accordance with section 12(5) of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 ("the Measure"), and the Learner Travel Information (Wales) Regulations 2009 (the "Regulations"). The current policy was published on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2019 for implementation in the 2020 academic year, post approval by Executive Committee in September. The Council are more generous in respect of home to school transport entitlement, than the Welsh Government statutory limits. The Council offer a non-statutory travel grant for post 16 learners of £150.

### **Blaenau Gwent 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme**

#### **SEWC 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Regional Group**

Since 2016/17, the Education Transformation team led on the creation and administration of the South East Wales Consortia (SEWC) 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Regional Group, based on a strategic need to share good practice and learn from other Councils who are engaged in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century schools and All-Through Schooling (ATS) agendas. Blaenau Gwent's lead role on the SEWC 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Regional Group has enhanced the profile of the Council on a regional and national basis. The establishment of the group demonstrates an outward looking approach and will contribute to Blaenau Gwent taking forward the review and implementation of the School Organisation Policy (2017) in the 2019/20 academic session.

#### **Blaenau Gwent 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme**

The Education Transformation team manages the programme and all associated 21<sup>st</sup> Century School's projects. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme is a long-term strategic investment in the education estate throughout Wales. The Programme is broken down into phases of investment, categorised as Bands. The Band A Programme in Blaenau Gwent, successfully concluded in the autumn-term of 2019, with the delivery of the final project, Six Bells Campus.

The Band A Programme realised an investment of £20.25m in school estate between 2014-19 (50/50 WG and Council funded) as follows:

- **Tredegear Comprehensive School Remodelling Project £2.3m:**

The project concluded in 2017. A project closure/ evaluation workshop session with Construction Excellence Wales (CEW) deemed the project to be an example of best practice in terms of:

- value for money;
- partnership working;
- project management arrangements; and,
- effective delivery on a live site.

The project closure report has now been submitted to Welsh Government.



- **Abertillery Learning Community (Tillery Street Campus) New Build Primary School - £9.8m:** The new school was occupied by staff and pupils June 2016. Phase 4 of the project, which involved demolition of the former school and external works, concluded in November 2016. The Welsh Government Minister for Education officially opened the Tillery Street Campus in January 2017. The closure report has been finalised and submitted to Welsh Government.
- **Ystruth Primary School Remodelling Project - £635,900:** The focus of the project was to remodel key areas of the school to meet the changing needs of the pupil population. The project had a specific focus on the transformation of provision for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder. The project commenced in October 2017 and concluded in August 2018 on programme and profile.
- **Abertillery Learning Community (Six Bells Campus) New Build Primary School - £8.8m (inclusive of an additional £150,000 of funding secured from Welsh Government in January 2019):** The project involved the development of a 360 place new build primary school along with a 60 place nursery and a 9 place resource base, to accommodate pupils from Queen Street and Bryngwyn Primary Campuses. Sewer diversion works concluded in July 2018, and the formal school build process commenced. Education was successful in securing an additional £150,000 to increase community parking on the site. This falls outside of the project and is planned for delivery between 2021 and 2022. The Minister for Education opened the Six Bells Campus in September 2019.

The Blaenau Gwent Band B Programme investment objective are as follows:

- **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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 in the right place at the right time.
- **Investment Objective 4:** to implement the 21<sup>st</sup> 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 vulnerable learners.

Blaenau Gwent 21st Century Schools Programme has an established programme management structure, delivered in line with the Managing Successful Programmes (MSP) methodology. The Programme Board who oversee it, is comprised of key Council Officers, along with external partners, and is accountable to Corporate Leadership Team, who act as Programme Sponsor. Projects are managed in accordance with Blaenau Gwent's Corporate Project Management Framework and PRINCE 2, and each has a dedicated project management team.

Welsh Government encourages and expects Councils to participate in a Gateway Review process. The Gateway Review is a form of peer review, which tests the Council's readiness and capacity to successfully deliver projects and programmes. 4 reviews have taken place to date within Blaenau Gwent, with the latest having taken place in 2019.

**The Education Transformation team agreed with the review team that, due to the programme status, the delivery confidence assessment should be split as follows, one for Band A and one for Band B respectively. For Band A, based upon a Gateway 5, the review team considered that the delivery confidence assessment as Green. For Band B, based upon a Gateway 0, the review team considered that the delivery confidence assessment as Amber, due to early stage of the programme. The outcome report, highlighted that the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools programme management arrangements are to be commended, as follows:**

***‘...all of the projects within the Portfolio have been successfully completed... ongoing monitoring and realisation of benefits is well-evidenced. The positive impact of these projects on education and wider societal outcomes in the Blaenau Gwent area is also clearly evidenced... the very high quality of programme management in evidence is impressive’.***

An audit of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Band A Programme was undertaken during the 2019/20 academic year, the outcome of which was a grading of ‘reasonable assurance’. Only 2 weaknesses were found which pre-date the existing programme team. The weaknesses found were pertaining to the Band A SOP (submitted in 2010), along with business case submissions pre-2014. Both of these weaknesses have subsequently been addressed by the current Programme team.

**The 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 Band B Programme seeks to deliver the following key projects in line with the investment objectives:

- Continued secondary school re-modelling within the following priority schools:
  - Abertillery Learning Community Secondary Campus
  - Brynmawr Foundation School
  - River Centre Learning Community
  - Tredegar Comprehensive School

This project will be a continued focus due to the level of investment required, in line with future bandings of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme – **Business case submission is programmed throughout 2021.**

- The development of a new 360 primary school to replace Glyncoed Primary, which is the only category ‘D’ building in terms of condition within county borough – **All business cases have been submitted and approved by Welsh Government**
- Primary School remodelling within the Ebbw Fawr Valley consisting of Beaufort Hill, Cwm and Rhos y Fedwen Primary Schools – **All business cases have been submitted and approved by Welsh Government.**
- Remodelling of Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg to address ongoing condition and suitability issues – **The business case for which has been submitted and approved by Welsh Government.**

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance announced on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2018 that £30 million (100% funding, with no match requirement from Councils), would be allocated to support capital projects dedicated to and growing Welsh language in education (the grant was to be administered in addition to the capital allocations confirmed in Band B). In addition to the Band B funding envelope, Blaenau Gwent Council received confirmation in October 2018, that they were successful in securing £6 million from the Welsh-medium capital grant, along with £200,000 from the Capital Childcare Grant. The grants were awarded in line with the proposal to create a new 210 place Welsh-medium primary school and associated childcare facility in the Tredegar/ Sirhowy valley. This proposal is currently subject to statutory consultation, which is scheduled to conclude on the 29<sup>th</sup> January 2021. The delivery programme/timeline has and continues to be subject to regular review throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic.

**School Organisation/ Transformation Project Implementation and Delivery-** the Education Transformation team manage wider Education project development and delivery, ensuring that there is clear alignment with all relevant fields and areas of work, including the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme. Over the last academic year, the following projects have been managed by the team, in close working partnership with other relevant service areas.

**Brynmawr School 3G Pitch Project** – Two business cases were developed and both prudential borrowing and external funding were approved for the project. The Education Transformation team secured £200,000 from the Artificial Surfaces Collaboration Programme – the largest donation made by the programme, towards the development of a 3G pitch. The project is currently within the implementation phase and scheduled to conclude in the autumn of 2021.

**Class Size Grant Revenue and Capital Funding** – The Education Transformation team secured £338,108.10 of revenue funding which is to be reviewed annually in terms of allocation, in reducing class sizes. The team also bid for capital funding and successfully secured £199,600 and effectively delivered 2 projects on programme and profile in Willowtown and Georgetown Primary Schools.

**Welsh Government Class Size Revenue Grant** - criteria was to reduce the number of classes in schools of 29 and over in the foundation phase, along with one or more of the following:

- significant levels of pupils who are eFSM;
- significant levels of pupils with ALN/SEN;
- significant levels of pupils who are EAL/WAL;
- schools with below average outcomes which categorised as red or amber under the School Categorisation System.

The grant allocation of the last 2 years is as follows:

- 2019/20 - £105,659.25 was split between Blaen y Cwm Primary School and Abertillery Learning Community
- 2020/21 - £198,664 was split between Brynbach Primary School, Abertillery Learning Community, Deighton Primary School, Ebbw Fawr learning Community and Coed y Garn Primary School

In January 2021 Welsh Government decided to extend this for another round of funding:

- 2021/22 - £130,938 has been split between Brynbach Primary School, Abertillery Learning Community, Deighton Primary School and Ebbw Fawr learning Community

**Rural Schools** - The Council has been successful in securing Welsh Government 'Small and Rural' Schools Grants in order to support schools with low pupil populations and categorisation to:

1. **Encourage innovation**
2. **Support greater school to school working**
3. **Provide additional administrative support**
4. **Increase the community use of school buildings**

The recipients and grants within Blaenau Gwent over the last 3 years are as follows:

- 2019/20 - £35,873 **Sofrydd Primary School**
- 2020/21 - £35,904 **Rhos y Fedwen Primary School**
- 2021/22 - £35,944 **St Mary's R.C Primary School**

**Tredeggar 3G Pitch** - In December 2019, the Education Transformation team secured funding to deliver a new 3G pitch, to replace the existing Astroturf at Tredeggar Comprehensive School, this successfully concluded in February 2020, and became operational in August 2020.

**St Mary's CIW MUGA** - The Education Transformation team completed a business case on behalf of St Mary's CIW School, to secure funding for a Multi-Use Games area. The project was successfully concluded in September 2019.

### **Period Equity Project**

The Period Equity Project in Blaenau Gwent has been hailed as an example of best practice by both Welsh Govt. and the UK Period Poverty Task Force. The project case study was presented at both the UK Task Force and the Period Dignity Round Table with the Deputy Minister Jane Hut in February 2020. BG employed a project methodology in order to deliver against the Period Dignity Grant, which commenced in 2018. A project group was established with representation from relevant Council services, health, private and third sector groups and organisations, along with Trade Unions.

A School and Community Engagement plan was established and baselines assessments was carried out with children, young people and the wider community, in order to establish the level of access and wider issues relating to period poverty. Questions were tailored to the target audience. A Neighbourhood Community Network with a period poverty focus was established by Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, to compliment the project group, broaden its reach and scope. The project was also aligned to the work of the Healthy Schools Coordinator, via the delivery of and training around the Growing up Resource and School Health Research Network. The purpose of this was to assess the status of delivery in terms of education, raise awareness of the project, explore and address gaps.

School Councils and the BG Youth Forum have been actively engaged in promoting awareness and understanding around access to products, peer support and to inform education and training requirements. Working in partnership with PHS, the Council has sourced and is committed to providing eco/environmentally friendly products from 2020 onwards. The project reach is significant and includes: schools co-located sporting and leisure facilities, youth centres childcare and early years' settings and community centres. In addition, alternative funding has been sourced by groups and services in order to compliment delivery i.e. the Rotary Club.

Over the course of the last year, our priority has been to ensure sanitary provision continued to be made readily available to all pupils - particularly pupils. This has been achieved via effective working with school's partner organisations i.e. Tredeggar Comprehensive School hand delivered supply of products to females during lockdown. The Council ensured that products were made available to pupils either via schools, community settings or as part of the delivery of free school meals throughout the pandemic. In addition, childcare hubs were run via BG schools where free products were readily made available. During the past year Education have continued to monitor stock and replenish schools and community settings as and when required.

### **The Welsh in Education Strategic Plan**

Section 84 of the Schools Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013, requires each Council to prepare a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP). The purpose of the WESP is to set out the Council's strategic approach and direction in the development and delivery of Welsh-medium provision and Welsh education. The plan was approved by the Executive Committee and signed by the Corporate Director in 2016. The WESP is underpinned and informed by Welsh Government's current Welsh-medium Education Strategy (April 2010), along with the policy statement for 2015-16.

The Blaenau Gwent Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2017-20 is directly aligned to both the Welsh Government's and the Council's Welsh Language frameworks and strategies. The strategic priorities highlighted within the BG WESP document can be summarised as follows:

- Raise the profile and levels of participation for Welsh-medium education across the County Borough by 2020, to contribute to the vision for one million speakers by 2050.
- Increase the early year's provision offer to stimulate parental demand to enable growth across the County Borough.
- Increase transition rates from Welsh-medium nursery provision to Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg by 50% in 2020.
- Work regionally with South East Wales Local Authorities to secure places for Blaenau Gwent learners in Welsh-medium secondary provision between 2017-2020 and beyond.
- Improving Welsh medium learner outcomes by 2020 so that learners raise aspirations and improve their life chances.

The Blaenau Gwent WESP was formally approved by Welsh Government in March 2018. Blaenau Gwent was the first and only Council within the SEWC region at the time to have the plan approved with no further amendments. Alongside a review of the WESP, the Blaenau Gwent Welsh Education Forum (WEF) structure, membership and associated documentation are reviewed and strengthened annually. Due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, 3 out of 4 WEF meetings took place throughout the course of the academic year 2019/20 with membership, attendance and engagement sustained to a high standard throughout. Partners have commented on the effectiveness of the Forum, which has in turn had a positive impact upon membership, attendance and outcomes.

The Council has worked with neighbouring authorities via the regional POSP forum, to develop a booklet promoting the benefits of being bilingual. The document is reviewed annually and shared with the families of prospective pupils. The booklet is also linked to the admissions process and is shared via health professionals, early year's settings, schools and other relevant partners/professionals, in order to promote Welsh language opportunities and education locally. A copy of the booklet is also available via the Council's website.

It has been a difficult year to sustain the strong progress made in relation to the delivery of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan since 2019. However, the LA and its partners have remained committed to the delivery of the WESP, whilst also supporting the development of resources and engagement throughout the LA during the emergency response period and subsequent reopening of schools.

**Blaenau Gwent 2019/20 WESP self-assessment is based upon key progress in line with each priority area. The self-assessment has been sustained at an Amber, with the rate of completion against the 2019/20 action plan as follows:**

- **84% (or 49 actions) are complete;**
- **7% (or 4 actions) ongoing; and,**
- **9% (5 actions) actions in development.**

#### **Blaenau Gwent 10 Year Plan**

Local Authorities must submit their first draft 10-year Plan to the Welsh Ministers on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2022, with the plan operational from September 2022. The current BG WESP will remain in force until that date. Education has already begun working with the BG WEF in order to establish a draft 10-year plan for consultation and approval by 31<sup>st</sup> January 2022. Following ministerial approval, the plan will come into effect on 1 September 2022. A workshop has been programmed with relevant services and partners in December 2020, to begin working on the priorities and associated consultation process.

**The Education Transformation Service is delivering effectively against its statutory duties, is fully compliant with legislation and the associated policy in doing so.** The Service has not only worked within its regulatory framework, but strived to identify and develop additional resources and tools to add value to its work. For example, the TE100 and Facilities Review Processes. Timeframes are often challenging due to the nature of the statutory processes and high workload of the

service area; however, the service area has to date delivered on all relevant policy, strategy, programme and project targets. The ET team aim to increase non-statutory related performance also i.e. increase TE100 maintenance and repair resolution rates and decrease associated timeframes. Performance assessments for each of the areas within the ET service are completed via the FADE process.

## Early Years

### Partnership work with Early Years

The Early Years Childcare and Play Manager and the Service Manager – Education and Business Change meet termly to discuss and monitor:

- Childcare and admissions data, planning, development and management
- The development of childcare aligned to education settings
- Transition planning from early years to foundation phase
- Non-maintained settings uptake/ admission, progression and development
- Facilities based developments such as after and pre-school provision
- Demand for childcare and education places etc.

There is an effective communication process in places and both teams are working in partnership to ensure a synergy between the two services areas.

The Early Years, Childcare and Play (EYCP) team within the Social Services Directorate meets the statutory requirements placed on the Council to ensure a sufficiency of childcare (under the Childcare Act 2006), to provide a Family Information Service (under the same Act) and the sufficiency of play opportunities (Children and Families Measure 2010). A Childcare Sufficiency Assessment is conducted every five years, with annual action plans and progress reports being reported to both Council and Welsh Government in the intervening years.

### Childcare

**The 2020/21 CSA progress report and action plan noted that progress against last year's actions have been impacted significantly by the COVID-19 pandemic and many will be taken forward as priorities for 2021/22.** The main focus of our work as a Local Authority team during the last year has been on supporting the childcare sector to stay open and remain sustainable and supporting families requiring/using childcare.

The picture for settings in the early days of the pandemic was changing rapidly with providers making decisions about whether opening was a viable option for them, whilst the Local Authority team was striving to put in place arrangements to ensure a service could be provided to key worker and vulnerable children. The Flying Start team re-purposed one of their settings within a week to specifically support vulnerable children, completing a variation for Care Inspectorate Wales to enable them to offer extended provision to a greater age range to accommodate sibling groups. The Flying Start team also worked closely with Social Services Children's teams and the Family Information Service to help place children who couldn't access the repurposed hub. The EYCP team set up the Welsh Governments C-CAS scheme within a very short time-frame at the beginning of the pandemic to ensure that places were found for children and funding was delivered quickly to providers delivering these necessary services. The level of commitment and flexibility within the sector was further tested in response to Summer holiday arrangements for vulnerable children and the sector responded magnificently, with excellent examples of providers going above and beyond, including setting up new settings and systems to ensure they could offer services to children who needed it.

Several schemes to support settings financially have emerged during the year including the Economic Resilience Development Fund, Childcare Provider Grant, Childcare Offer Small COVID Grant and the Cwtch grant, in addition to other forms of government support. Whilst there have been challenges in setting up administrative systems quickly to deliver these grants, they were successfully delivered in partnership with other Local Authority colleagues, Umbrella Organisation support and with the childcare providers themselves. Over £250,000 has been distributed to settings during the second half of the year. Additionally, it has been

necessary for the team to share guidance and updates in respect of other schemes impacting on the sector including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, Protective Measures in Childcare, the Self Employed Income Scheme along with other grant programmes and sources of support.

The closure of childcare to children other than keyworker and vulnerable children demanded that we review our support for children with ALN and children attending childcare through our Assisted Places schemes, who were unable to access their childcare place. Plans were put in place to offer alternative services with resource packs being delivered to children's homes and regular contact maintained with professionals within the EYCP team to support families to continue with play, learning and development at home.

After a period of suspension during Summer Term, the Childcare Offer was restarted during August and presented a huge challenge for the Local Authority team and providers, due to the shortened time-frame for dealing with double the amount of applications, but also with changes to the eligibility guidance which needed to be understood and implemented. A huge effort on both the Local Authority and provider parts meant the scheme was back up and running from September 2020. The level of challenge there has been for childcare providers and the teams supporting providers, both within the Local Authority and in other organisations, during 2020-21 cannot be overstated.

In terms of supply and demand the report notes;

Despite challenging circumstances, the service has had some new providers open during the year including a new Day Nursery in Aberbeeg, a new Full Day Care provision on a school site in Tredegar, as a sister setting to an existing successful Day Nursery in Tredegar and one new childminder.

There has been a loss of two providers during the year with the closure of an After School Club in Brynmawr and a Full Day Care facility in Tredegar. Whilst the pandemic had some impact on the latter provider, there were ongoing sustainability issues with both that could not be overcome despite support being provided through our team.

During the pandemic a significant number of providers in Blaenau Gwent remained open to provide a service to keyworker and vulnerable children. During the first lockdown period, only 33.9% of services closed completely representing 42.8% of childcare places. Providers that had closed, have re-opened from late June 2020 and remained open, with the exception of most after-school provision that have been impacted by concerns around use of school buildings, the mixing of bubbles and school closures.

In terms of overall childcare numbers there has been again been a further modest year on year increase in the number childcare places in Blaenau Gwent over the last year, from 1403 places to 1476 places. There has been an increase in the number of Day Nursery places, from 314 places to 352 places. A new provider offering sessional care was registered for 19 places during the year. One new childminder registered during the year offering 8 new places.

### **Play**

A Play Sufficiency Assessment is conducted every three years, the last full assessment being completed in 2019, with progress reports and updated action plans being submitted to Welsh Government in the intervening years. The team has secured good progress since the last full assessment with action plans being kept under regular review with partners. As with the CSA, progress against the PSA Action was hindered by the pandemic during 2020/21, but there was some significant progress which includes; after-school play provision for children with disabilities was established at Blaina ICC, progress at improving play areas in line with the corporate strategic play area review was achieved, play provision for vulnerable children offered during school holidays and Wild Camps project launched.

The team has an active group of play volunteers who have become qualified and experienced through support given and opportunities to practice and this has allowed us to expand opportunities being offered for Play across the Borough. We now have a well-established Wild Tots group, an outdoor parent and toddler group providing rich opportunities to play, with plans to extend the provision to two additional locations in Blaenau Gwent. We have also in 2021 been able to use our own volunteer team led by a Play Leader to deliver open access play sessions across six locations in Blaenau Gwent.

### **Non-maintained Foundation Phase Nursery**

The EYCP team provides support and monitoring for those childcare providers registered to provide Foundation Phase Nursery places. There are currently three providers in Blaenau Gwent, with a new Welsh medium provider registering from Summer term 2021. They offer 28 am and pm places, but also offer Flying Start, Childcare Offer and fee paying provision. In recent years non-maintained providers have delivered FPN Education to between 1 and 9 children in any one term. The team supported Welsh Government, via the Education Achievement Service, to test the new early year's curriculum for non-maintained providers. The team worked closely with selected childminders to support them in testing the new curriculum and reporting back to Welsh Government and worked in partnership with PACEY Cymru to provide weekly support sessions from May – July 2021. The team co-ordinated the distribution of the 'Recruit, Recover, Raise Standards: Accelerating Learning' grant to the sector in March 2021.

### **Family Information Service**

The Family Information Service continues to act as an information resource for parents/carers, childcare and play providers, for the team and other professionals, needing to access sector data and information on wider services of interest for children and families. The service has a very active social media presence, has a recently developed website (to be launched shortly) and continues to deal with enquiries via telephone, social media and email. The service supports the Information, Advice and Assistance function of the Council as established in line with the Social Services and Well-being Act 2014.

Key facts and figures;

- Social media followers – 3852
- 2,657 enquiries handled via telephone calls, social media questions/comments and email

### **Childcare Offer**

The team have been delivering the Welsh Government Childcare Offer since 2017, firstly as a pilot authority and subsequently as a delivery' authority for both Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen County Borough Councils. Key facts and figures;

- Processed over 1000 applications from Blaenau Gwent families
- Processed over 1500 applications from Torfaen families
- £3.8 million has been drawn down in childcare funding
- £4.1 million capital investment programme secured

The team secured the £4.1M capital investment under the Childcare Offer Capital Programme and worked closely with colleagues in Education Transformation to identify opportunities for childcare developments to align to 21<sup>st</sup> Century Programme plans under Band B. The Council were successful in securing Welsh Government Childcare Capital Grant during the 2018/19 academic session. A business case was submitted by Social Services at the end of September 2018, for the £60m Grant. Blaenau Gwent were successful in their submission, resulting in an award of £4.7m, to deliver the following schemes:

- A full day care facility in Six Bells (since abandoned due to siting issues with funding being redirected to the other schemes)



- A day care facility in the Glyncoed area
- An extension of Flying Start's provision in Swfrydd
- Remodelling work at Blaina ICC
- A small grant scheme for childcare providers

The above projects are being reported via 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme Board and the Early Years Development Childcare and Play Partnership.

### **Additional Learning Needs – Early Years**

The EYCP team and Flying Start programme supports children with Additional Learning Needs accessing pre-school provision between the ages of 2-3 years. Work to prepare for the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill 2018, has continued and the team has built up stronger relationships with the Education Inclusion Service, particularly the Early Years ALN Lead Officer. Training had to be revamped to allow for virtual delivery and the team has been delivering the Gwent approved modular ALN training to the sector. Person Centred Planning is starting to be embedded into practice and settings are becoming more confident in the use of new paperwork. It has been agreed as part of a team restructure that we would seek to appoint an ALN support worker to complement the work of the Early Years ALN Lead Officer and the job description and person specification for this post is currently under construction. The work of the ALN sub group, which is a multi-disciplinary group of professionals that decide on support to be offered to pre-school children, has been reviewed and streamlined and a further review in the light of developments is underway currently (August 2021).

### **Speech, Language and Communication**

Through 2019 /20 the team has been a member of the Gwent Regional Early Years Speech, Language and Communication Needs group (SLCN) which has been coordinated by ComIT – Communication Intervention Team covering the 5 Gwent areas. Some BG schools and settings have had draft copies of the 3-3;11 booklets and all other booklets have been finalised. A meeting to agree rollout plans has been organised for September 2021.

### **Welsh Medium Support**

The Council has been committed to increasing the numbers of Welsh language settings and has worked in partnership with Mudiad Meithrin and Education colleagues in recent years to raise the profile of Welsh medium childcare and education. The EYCP Manager sits on the Welsh in Education Forum and also the Communications sub-group of the Forum to contribute to the work of raising the profile of Welsh medium education and childcare and thereby stimulating demand. Unfortunately, the pandemic has hindered plans to have promotional events in the last year, but plans will be revisited when it is deemed safe to do so. The team has supported the Mudiad Meithrin SAS programme and a new Cylch Meithrin in Tredegar has been established and further Welsh medium sessions are being run at a local English medium session, widening language choice in the Ebbw Vale area. Plans to develop a Welsh medium Day Nursery at Glyncoed are progressing well, with the final design being agreed and plans submitted to Planning. The team has also recently secured new Ti a Fi provision to be delivered from the Integrated Children's Centre in Blaina, starting in September 2021.

### **Transition**

The EYCP team, alongside the Flying Start Advisory Teacher work closely with childcare settings and school nurseries to implement the transition policy which includes the expectation that all schools and settings engage in termly area cluster meetings to share information about children transitioning to Nursery and good practice. This process continued throughout covid-19 via phone calls and TEAMS meetings. Paperwork was completed and sent electronically to the nursery teachers. Paperwork was updated in-line with the new ALN bill and now takes the format of the One Page Profile. This has supported discussions with nursery teachers as this

format is common between childcare and schools. The ALN Lead Officer and Flying Start Advisory Teacher supports enhanced transition arrangements for those children with AN identified through the AN Sub Group. A PCP transition meeting is held for all children who receive support through the EY AN Sub Group.

The compliance with this policy is monitored and the attendance of schools and settings is logged with follow-up undertaken if needed. Previously, there have been concerns regarding transition processes where schools do not always release staff to attend transition events. However, virtual meetings led to an improvement in engagement levels. Teachers who attended the virtual transition meetings report that they find them useful and it supports children to settle in the nursery.

The need for closer working remains and a pilot project was proposed for Spring Term 2020, however this was postponed. As COVID guidance is changed and relaxed and face to face meetings are resumed there are plans to introduce an Early Years network in Tredegar to strengthen joint working and sharing of practice between schools and settings. Tredegar has been chosen for the pilot as the schools and settings consistently engage well with each other and professionals. The proposed format for the network is for schools and settings to alternate quarterly hosting a short meeting after the working day. The agenda will be decided by the members of the network and facilitated by the FSAT. This will then be rolled out across the LA and will take place in clusters

#### **Pandemic Response**

The team responded quickly in March 2020 to ensure that a range of childcare settings were supported to remain open to allow keyworkers and vulnerable children to access childcare, later then in April 2020 setting up and delivering the Welsh Government Childcare Coronavirus Assistance Scheme in a matter of weeks, to support those keyworkers and vulnerable families with funded childcare. That scheme supported 276 children. At the same time the Childcare Offer was suspended to new entrants, then later reopened to all new application in August 2020 with revised guidance to take account of changes in employment status for some parents, caused by the pandemic. The team maintained weekly contact with all childcare providers from April to June 2020 to share emerging guidance, give advice and monitor the number of places open and filled. Guidance was pulled together in a local encompassing document to assist providers and support has been offered and taken up by settings in accessing a range of grants. The team have co-ordinated and supported different grant schemes introduced by Welsh Government to support the sector (Childcare Provider Grant, additional Children and Communities Cwtch Grant, additional Childcare Offer capital small grant scheme, Playworks).

### **2.3 Support for Other Services :Areas where good progress has been made:**

- **The Council's 21st Century Schools investment objectives are clearly aligned to the Vision for Education in improving educational standards and this is evidenced in a positive Gateway Review in 2019. Preparations for the Band B programme are well structured and deliverable.**
- **The Youth Service is good, taking account of its statutory duties and meeting them effectively, providing a wide range of universal and targeted opportunities for young people aged 11-25. NEET's levels are at their lowest levels i.e. 1.5% (9 young people). Effective participation structures are embedded across the Youth Service. The Independent 11-18 Counselling Service is very effective. The service is line managed by the Youth Service, which allows a co-ordinated approach to wellbeing between all projects.**
- **The Council has an enhanced knowledge of school capacity linked to the effective annual monitoring processes that are in place; along with an on-going facilities review/management protocols and effective admissions processes. This is evidenced by the annual review and publication of the School Admissions Policy.**
- **Strong progress is being made in relation to surplus places reduction, with the Council seeing an overall reduction in both the primary and secondary sectors over the last 6 years; with a continued decrease projected for both primary and secondary over the next 2 years, taking the primary percentage**

to 11% and secondary to 9%, by the 2021/22 academic year – with the overall combined projected status as 12%. There are very few sufficiency issues within Blaenau Gwent schools at present.

- Blaenau Gwent's Post 16 provision is provided in partnership with Coleg Gwent at the Blaenau Gwent Learning Zone in Ebbw Vale. The Learning Zone's Self-Assessment Report (SAR) recognises that there is an effective partnership approach between the Council and Coleg Gwent, which is resulting in improvements to the participation rates of Post 16 learners, a broadening of the learning offer and increasing attainment levels for both academic and vocational learners. The 'A' Level A\*-E pass rate is 99.1% and is in line with the national average and the vocational learning success rate (retention/attainment) is over 80% against all levels. The ALIS tertiary benchmarking data places the Learning Zone in the top 8% of Post 16 learning institutions for added value across the UK.
- The Council have a highly effective system in place linked to forecasting and monitoring pupil place requirements; this is evidenced pupil projection accuracy, which was at 97% for primary and 94% for secondary during the 2019/20 academic session and has been continually high over the last 3 academic years.
- The Council has good arrangements in place to support the co-ordination of early years, childcare and play to ensure sufficiency. Childcare is a rapidly developing sector in Blaenau Gwent and has grown from 142 registered places in 2002, to 1332 places currently. The sector continues to develop in response to emerging needs.
- The Welsh medium proposal is at implementation stage (Summer 2021).

### 2.3 Support for Other Services: Areas requiring improvement:

- The delivery of the WESP targets is dependent upon the Welsh medium seedling proposal. The new 10 year WESP is under development.
- The ET and Youth Services are very dependent upon external funding and sustainability is a key consideration. Therefore, continued monitoring of team capacity is required in order to assess capacity requirements and secure/ sustain the positive progression of service priorities. The ESF Inspire funding risk is escalated.
- There is a need to consider the management of the home to school and college transport operations and/or how the Environment/Regeneration and Education Directorates develop procedures, and agreements that are able to more effectively address identified gaps in reviewing the policy.
- A review of online admissions is underway in order to further improve parental engagement with the admissions process, and address the current ineffective online system. A business case is under development, in line with the use of Capita One's online module, which is the system used within current neighbouring and other Councils throughout Wales. This will require investment, which will be beneficial in the long-term and could enhance partnership working and data monitoring with other Council.
- There are risks associated with the revenue implications associated with the Youth Services Inspire initiative, which is currently funded through European (ESF) funding.
- Review progress against the Childcare Sufficiency Audit (CSA).
- Responding to the COVID-19 emergency to ensure that learner progression is maintained in safe and blended learning settings.

### Inspection Area 3 – Leadership and management Lead LP

#### 3.1 Quality and effectiveness of leaders and managers

**The Education Directorate has a new and vibrant leadership team with a permanent Corporate Director of Education and Head of School Improvement appointed during academic year 2020-21. This restructure has also created new roles for Service Manager Education Transformation and Business Change and Young People and Partnerships and this has created additional capacity, especially for the school improvement agenda.**

**The Council has approved its Corporate Plan which acts as the Council's business plan and covered the four-year period 2018/22.** In order to comply with the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, the priority areas act as both the Council's Well-being and Improvement Objectives. As part of the Council's annual assessment of performance, the Council has identified that our ambitious programme of activity was in the early stages of development and implementation. As part of this we were honest in that we may need to make some changes to the Corporate Plan moving forward. This resulted in some amendments being made to the Outcome Statements in order to better demonstrate the contribution different areas across the Council will contribute to achieving them, enhancing our 'One Council' approach. The overall emphasis of each Outcome Statement has not changed, but involves cross-cutting activity.

From these considerations, the Corporate Plan 2020/22 Outcome Statements are:

- Protect and enhance our environment and infrastructure to benefit our communities
- Support a fairer sustainable economy and community
- To enable people to maximise their independence, develop solutions and take an active role in their communities
- An ambitious and innovative council delivering the quality services we know matter to our communities

The Outcome Statements have been written to be cross-cutting in nature and shows how education makes a key contribution to all of priority areas within the Corporate Plan. The global pandemic also provided the opportunity to consider priorities, particularly for the Education Directorate and this has manifested itself in our Recovery and Renewal Plan. The Executive (July 2021) has received the plan and was agreed to monitor the progress within the 4 corporate priorities of Education/learners, Community, Economic/Business and the new operating model. This will consider approach will consider the impact of the pandemic and ensure the focus of business planning up to 2022 and delivering on the outcomes needed to support the community and local economy. Education has completed an impact assessment and is well-placed to make further progress against the backdrop of COVID-19. Indeed, Estyn produced a positive overall letter for BG in line with the national Thematic Review and this was followed-up by a further constructive letter in the Summer of 2021.

**CLT and the Members had an active leadership role in undertaking the refresh of the Corporate Plan. Consequently, the Education Directorate business plans have been aligned to the Corporate Plan to ensure that progress against the outcomes can be clearly demonstrated.** This will be reported periodically through the Finance and Performance Report, presented to CLT, Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee and Executive Committee. Regular reporting through the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee also takes place as identified through the Scrutiny Forward Work Programme. This ensures a level of accountability to the work being undertaken by the Directorate with Scrutiny Committee able to challenge the work undertaken, particularly establishing robust self-evaluation arrangements. Clear areas for further improvement are well defined and based on a thoroughly forensic approach to data analysis and an embedded culture of robust self- evaluation. Improvement processes are well embedded into routine work. On-going evaluation is an area of strength and is an embedded feature of the work of the Education Directorate and the Council.

On a regular basis, as part of the Council's Corporate Performance Framework, the Director of Education and the Executive Member meet to discuss work being undertaken in the directorate including areas of good progress and where further improvement is required. The Chair and Vice Chair of Scrutiny are also invited to attend these meetings on a less frequent basis. This is to align the work of Scrutiny and the Executive.

The PSB is working towards five well-being objectives as outlined in their Well-being Plan 2018/23:

- The best start in life for everyone
- Safe and friendly communities
- Look after and protect the natural environment
- Forge new pathways to prosperity
- Encourage healthy lifestyles

The Council's refreshed Corporate Plan is clearly aligned to the Well-being Plan and its five objectives.

The PSB has developed a Strategic Work Programme which was signed off in January 2020. This Work Programme has identified five High Level Actions to be taken forward:

- First 1,000 days and Early Years Pathfinder;
- Building a healthier Gwent / Integrated Well-being Networks;
- Climate Change;
- Blaenau Gwent Sustainable Food Programme; and
- Foundational Economy.

Each of the high level actions has an identified PSB Sponsor. The Education Department is clearly aligned to a number of these actions and will be involved in their delivery moving forward and progress will be evidenced through the Directorate business plans.

**The Improving Schools report (Summer 2021) that discusses school categorisation and the school inspection profile over the last 3 years demonstrates the effectiveness of leaders and managers in Local Government Education Services.** The Corporate Improvement Plan (CIP) provides an effective strategic framework to support improvement in Education. These are interpreted further in the underpinning 4 strategic improvement objectives in the Education Directorate's Education Improvement Plan (EIP). The priorities in the EIP have been reviewed and the on-going and cyclical self-evaluation processes evaluate progress against our key priorities, identify where good progress has been made and where further improvement is needed. These processes are embedded and well led.

Effective leadership across the Council has been demonstrated via the Transforming Blaenau Gwent Programme of change; service delivery has changed as a result and efficiency savings have been made. Citizen voice is visible in Council plans and has underpinned cultural change across the board. Financial Efficiency Projects (FEPs) and more recently the Bridging the Gap initiatives have established balanced revenue budgets. The schools' Individual School Budget (ISB) has been protected (uplift of 3.6% 2021-22). The new political administration has taken difficult decisions against the backdrop of continuing austerity measures and prioritised school improvement accordingly.

The Vision for Education based on a school-led self-improving system is under review alongside the much improved school categorisation and school inspection profile over the last 3 years demonstrates that schools are taking a school-led approach, are working with other schools in a school-to-school way and beginning to improve outcomes and wellbeing for children and young people. Schools are embodying the vision and supporting the approach to school improvement locally, regionally and nationally, particularly through effective cluster working arrangements.

**Effective strategic collaboration through working closely with the EAS is demonstrated in the LA/EAS Business Plan, which are well understood by school leaders and members; termly monitoring of progress against targets provide useful information to CLT, Scrutiny and Executive Committee as well as annually to all schools and school Governors.** Scrutiny has improved, with challenging questions from Members now illustrating their improved understanding. Many Members of the new administration were previously members of scrutiny committee/executive and as such their understanding has continued to develop over the last 3 years. However, changes to reporting of school performance in line with the national reform agenda will need to be worked through in 2021. It is anticipated that school performance reporting will focus more on progress measures using matched-data and it will be important to develop members understanding further in this regard.

Additionally, the Service Manager for Inclusion has worked with HTs to redesign the ALN Service operating out of Pen y Cwm Special School and the operating model for the River Centre. Similarly, effective leadership is demonstrated by the Service Manager for Education Transformation and Business Change in the implementation of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme, for example, Band A is now fully complete with the opening of the new Six Bells Primary Campus in September 2019 (part of the Abertillery Learning Community), and the agreement of Band B plans. The Band A programme was delivered on time and within budget. Leaders in the Directorate work well with officers across the Council this is illustrated by the fact that plans are informed by audit, data analysis and self-evaluation is evident in the quarterly joint performance and finance report. The findings from internal audit informs the next round of school audit plans, sufficiency of childcare places audit informs placement planning, parental questionnaires inform development programmes in Flying Start settings. Corporate join-up between leaders across the Council is clear.

**The quality and effectiveness of senior officers in the Education Directorate is evaluated regularly, for example, through the Corporate Performance Management processes comprising Interim and Annual evaluations throughout the academic year.** 360 degree evaluations comprise part of this process. The Managing Director of the Council leads the review panel for CLT officers, which includes annual reviews for both the Corporate Director and Head of School Improvement and Inclusion. The Executive Member for Education is the Chair of the regional Joint Executive Committee, which is well led.

**The impact of leadership at officer and member level is demonstrated via the improving performance profile of schools via their categorisation, school inspection outcomes, the pace of school improvement and the robustness of their use of full statutory powers of intervention. Full powers of intervention are currently in place in two underperforming secondary schools and both have demonstrated improved results in KS4 in 2020-21, although it is acknowledged through CDGs.**

**The Service Manager-Education Transformation and Business Change is a highly effective manager who leads the regional 21<sup>st</sup> Century planning group** and the Service Manager for Inclusion leads the regional Inclusion Group. Similarly, the Service Manager for the Young People and Partnerships (previous Chair of the National Youth Service Board) also contributes to the National Youth Work Group and sits on the national Youth Work Board.

**Leadership of the Youth Service is strong,** enhanced by an effective annual training programme for all youth workers, prepared each year using feedback from a workforce development survey. The local authority effectively co-ordinates open access and targeted support for vulnerable children and young people.

Demonstrable impact has been made through the Raising Aspirations Group and NEET Practitioner Forum subgroup to implement the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework. This progressive partnership approach, strategically and operationally linking with a key range of providers and partners, has been highly effective in steadily reducing the numbers of young people becoming NEET from 8.7% in 2009 to 1.5% in 2020.

**Similarly, the work of the intervention panel for Schools Causing Concern has progressed well under the Chair of the Executive Member for Education.**

This work is challenging and effective leadership at both political, officer and EAS level has been clearly demonstrated. The statutory warning notice in EFLC has been lifted and ESTYN has removed the school from significant improvement follow up. The ALC Corporate Group has been re-established to oversee both the work of the Learning Community in raising educational standards and securing sustainability in reducing their net revenue budget deficit. The SWN at BFS will be reviewed in the Autumn term 2021 and ESTYN have convened an improvement conference as part of the WG's Support for Schools in Special Measures initiative. There is a 'One Plan' approach in place for BFS and the Council are leading on subsequent meetings. Both ALC and BFS have improved governance arrangements. The River Centre has been issued with a pre-warning notice letter and is formally recognised as a School Causing Concern. There are stringent monitoring arrangements in place. Sofrydd Primary School is likely to be removed from the SCC protocols, once a permanent Headteacher is appointed in the Autumn term 2021.

Good leadership through clear communication of performance priorities has been a key feature of the work of the Directorate; with DMT, CLT, School Improvement and Inclusion Leadership Teams, Wider Group, DMT meetings with the Executive member for Education, meetings, during Headteachers, with the EAS Challenge Advisers, with the PSB, with the Governors Association and with team leaders of LGES services e.g. the corporate self-evaluation group.

During recent years, **Members have made difficult decisions such as protecting school budgets, prioritising the allocation of significant capital funding to Blaenau Gwent's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools investment programme, reducing financial inefficiencies in certain parts of ALN provision whilst prioritising growth in this area going forward, in line with ALN reform. Difficult decisions have also been made regarding the need to undertake a series of service review for example, the Home to School Transport and Post 16 Transport Policy, School Crossing Patrols, and Welsh medium provision to name but a few.**

Moreover, capital budget decisions regarding affordability of the agreed proposals set out in the Band B 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools programme are now confirmed. Members are well informed and keen to ensure that reviews are scheduled in a timely way thus avoiding any unintended consequences.

**Members are taking responsibility for the quality of their work, this is evidenced by Members undertaking self-evaluation; an evaluation of each Scrutiny meeting is taken with both officers and members and evidence from this is used throughout the year to make minor amendments and to feed the evidence used for the annual evaluation.** All work undertaken throughout the year is captured in a Scrutiny Forward Work Programme, which is updated quarterly and reported into the Executive Committee for decision-making and finally to Full Council

### 3.1 Quality and effectiveness of leaders and managers: Areas where good progress has been made:

- The improving School Categorisation and School Inspection profile over the last 3 years demonstrates the increased effectiveness of leaders and managers in Local Government Education Services in Blaenau Gwent.
- The Council considers all evidence and implements its full use of statutory powers, where applicable.
- The impact of good, effective leadership is demonstrated through programme completion for example, the opening of Six Bells. There is strong progress through the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Band A programme and approval of Band B programme for 2020 to 2026 period.

- Regional leadership is being exercised well by senior officers e.g. regional Welsh medium POSP group.
- Member understanding and engagement in LGES activity, particularly the Exec Member and Scrutiny arrangements.
- Appointment of a permanent Corporate Director of Education post during the autumn term 2020. This has been followed with a review of the Education Directorate's structural requirements, including appointing an additional post for school improvement capacity.

### 3.1 Quality and effectiveness of leaders and managers Areas requiring improvement:

- To continue to develop officer expertise through the Professional Learning offer.
- To further develop member led self-evaluation activity across key service areas located within Local Government Education Services, for example via the Scrutiny sub-group looking at wellbeing in schools.
- To continue to develop Member understanding and effectiveness via the Member Development Programme.
- There are risks associated ALN Reform and with securing appointment to the Service Manager-Inclusion role for the Education Directorate, with recruitment initiated in the Autumn term 2021.

### 3.2 Self-evaluation and improvement planning

**The Self-Evaluation Policy (reviewed September 2020) and SE Toolkit clearly sets out the cycle for self-evaluation processes and reporting. The FADE approach to evaluations is now embedded into routine practice.** Processes are ongoing, cyclical in nature and totally aligned with corporate framework and policy. The Education Directorate is confident in its SE processes and their ability to sustain continual improvement. The Council is swift in its action and use of full statutory powers where applicable, to secure the improvement required.

**LGES services that are working well and those requiring improvement are clearly set out in the main Self-Evaluation Report (SER), last updated in September/October 2021. Progress against our key priorities are also evaluated and reported to Scrutiny and Executive Committees.**

Arrangements to share and consult with others regarding the draft SER are well established: the draft SER document is shared with Scrutiny annually to seek their views as part of the agreed Scrutiny Forward Work Programme. A high-level evaluation Summary SER sets out where good progress has been made and where further work is needed. This information is further distilled down to draw through key items of information which are then reflected as actions for improvement in Business Plans. This process works well for the Directorate and helps to sustain improvement in pupil outcomes and wellbeing.

**The Council provides effective corporate support for self-evaluation and improvement planning; the Corporate Performance Framework provides the strategic guide to align our work with the corporate model. The SER underpins the quarterly Finance and Performance report.**

Corporate support for self-evaluation directly informs and aligns to the business planning and improvement processes which are also aligned to the Risk Management Framework. The higher level risks are escalated to the Corporate Risk Register and kept under quarterly review. Risks from the Directorate are escalated to CLT as appropriate and equally when reviewed, risks from CLT may be de-escalated to the Directorate level.



**The Council's Performance Management framework effectively integrates people, service and financial planning.** The Joint Performance and Finance Report Reporting arrangements have been improved by the continued development of outcome focussed measures. The Finance and Performance report is presented to CLT, Executive Committee and corporate overview scrutiny committee on a quarterly basis and the Director provides a commentary update on progress made within the Directorate for the Executive and Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committees. The Joint Performance and Finance report is a key part of the governance and accountability arrangement

Blaenau Gwent is committed to partnership working to raise standards, through its active participation with the SEWC/EAS regional school improvement service, through the regional GEMs service for pupils with EAL, through the regional VI/HI or SENCom provision etc.

The PSB is working towards five well-being objectives as outlined in their [Well-being Plan 2018/23](#):

- The best start in life for everyone
- Safe and friendly communities
- Look after and protect the natural environment
- Forge new pathways to prosperity
- Encourage healthy lifestyles

The Council's refreshed Corporate Plan is clearly aligned to the Well-being Plan and its five objectives.

The PSB has developed a Strategic Work Programme which was signed off in January 2020. This Work Programme has identified five High Level Actions to be taken forward:

- First 1,000 days and Early Years Pathfinder;
- Building a healthier Gwent / Integrated Well-being Networks;
- Climate Change;
- Blaenau Gwent Sustainable Food Programme; and
- Foundational Economy.

Each of the high level actions has an identified PSB Sponsor. The Education Department is clearly aligned to a number of these actions and will be involved in their delivery moving forward and progress will be evidenced through the Directorate business plans. The Council has led on the establishment of a Post 16 Partnership Board. The Board's terms of reference are agreed, the body has met and the partnership will involve the Council, Coleg Gwent, secondary/special schools and work based learning providers.

**Partnership working between the Council and the EAS is strong and is subject to significant joint working and quality assurance.**

Blaenau Gwent is a key partner in the 5 Counties Adult and Community Learning (ACL) Partnership. Blaenau Gwent's most recent Estyn inspection was a joint inspection across the partnership and a joint action plan was developed. The inspection of the Adult and Community Learning Partnership in confirmed that outcomes were Good and Prospects for Improvement were Excellent.

On-going evaluations of progress through the business plan form a fundamental part of the monthly performance coaching sessions with all managers. Six monthly and annual PDR processes are underpinned by evaluations of progress against business plans which are robustly challenged by elected members who comprise the PDR panel.

### **3.2 Self-evaluation and improvement planning: Areas where good progress has been made:**

- **The Self-Evaluation Policy (reviewed September 2020) and the SE Toolkit clearly sets out the ongoing cycle for self-evaluation processes and reporting. The FADE approach to writing evaluations is now embedded into routine practice. Processes are totally aligned with Corporate policy. The Education Directorate is confident in its SE processes and their ability to sustain continual improvement. The Council is swift in its action and use of full statutory powers where applicable, to secure the improvement required.**
- **Partnership working between the Council and the EAS is strong and is subject to significant joint working and quality assurance. Impact evaluations reveal that the EAS and direct work of Challenge Advisers is having a positive impact on outcomes, provision and the quality of leadership. The School Categorisation and School Inspection Profile has improved significantly over the last 3 years effectively evidencing the effectiveness of our self-evaluation processes. Improvement has been secured in EFLC (out of SI), in Bryn Bach Primary, Glyncoed Primary School. Sofrydd Primary School in ALC (ESTYN monitoring visit likely in Autumn term 2021). Progress in ALC will continue to be monitored.**

### **3.2 Self-evaluation and improvement planning: areas requiring improvement**

- **To continue to engage members in meaningful self-evaluation activity, for example the Scrutiny sub-group looking at wellbeing in schools.**
- **To continue to ensure that business plans bring about the improvement required.**
- **To continue to engage with a wider stakeholder group when undertaking evaluations, particularly Headteachers**
- **To continue to ensure that regional SCC protocols deliver improvements in ALC, BFS, River Centre and Sofrydd Primary School.**

### **3.3 Professional learning**

**Professional learning is part of everyday business and staff keep up to date with knowledge about their own areas of responsibility via their professional associations, the EAS professional development events, via DMT meetings and through pan-Council participation in projects and task and finish groups as well as sharing practice across SEWC and all Wales professional groups for example, the SEWC sub groups of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools (Chaired by BG), the SEWC Inclusion Group (Chaired by BG), national ALN and School Improvement reform via the ADEW/ALN and School Improvement group with representation from the Head of School Improvement and Inclusion. The Youth Service Manager is Chair of the all Wales Youth Services Manager Group.**

Regular contact with Welsh Government officials and groups also support the CPD of staff for example, the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools team, Gateway Review activity, membership of ESTYN working groups (new LGES), EOTAS group and ALN Bill Reform group for EPs. Professional development opportunities for key staff have been provided via the national (ADEW) Aspiring Directors Programme, MSP and PRINCE 2 training, WG Programme Delivery CPD event, to name but a few.

**Headteachers, school leaders and Governors have access to the EAS Professional Learning Offer: impact is evaluated and demonstrable in improved outcomes, improved school inspection judgements, improved school categorisation profile.** Greater impact needs to be secured for our vulnerable learners in KS3 and KS4 as well as eFSM learners and these are key priorities for the Directorate going forward.

The Headteacher induction programme for new heads and aspiring deputies, was organised by an experienced Headteacher, which is in line with the Vision for education. There were 9 participants who engaged in 3 day HT induction that took place in the early part of the Autumn term. Participants decided which modules they wished to access. The modules that were offered were: Safeguarding, Managing allegations against staff, Audit and Finance, Organisational Development and Health and Safety. Many participants confirmed that the most popular sessions were managing allegations against staff and health and safety to which many participants attended. Whilst, all participants confirmed that the course objectives were met in full and many (80%) participants confirmed that the delivery of the courses were very good with a few confirming that it was good. Some participants made helpful suggestions as to how future courses could be further improved and

**The Council jointly plans with a number of agencies: the Education Achievement Service (EAS), Partners in the Learning Themed Group, Safeguarding with the Social Services Directorate, Coleg Gwent via the Post 16 Partnership Board, Schools via the agreed Partnership Agreement, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools team via the regional programme, services for VI/HI and EMAS via the SLA and the Youth Service with a number of key partners, such as Families First, Communities First, Careers Wales, Youth Offending Service, Social Services and Voluntary Sector partners. These all provide officers with opportunity to learn from elsewhere and is considered an important aspect of CPD.**

Effective collaborations are well established through the Youth Service, for example through the partnerships established within the YEP Framework, through programmes such as the Independent Counselling Service, the ESF funded Inspire programmes via partners in the Raising Aspiration Group (RAG) and Practitioner forums. The Raising Aspirations Group is led by the LA and has taken part in many WG trials to further development the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework. Levels of coordination and collaborative activity are high as evidenced by improved outcomes and reductions in the level of NEETs.

The Directorate makes a significant contribution to the work of the EAS via participation in regional SEWC Directors' meetings on a fortnightly basis, planning meetings with the EAS MD on a fortnightly basis, fortnightly and monthly progress meetings between the Council's School Improvement function and Principal Challenge Adviser facing BG, joint planning arrangements for schools causing concern, a timetable of Intervention Meetings between senior Directorate Officers, EAS Headteachers and Chairs of Governors for schools causing concern. These opportunities are again viewed and highly valued as CPD opportunities for BG officers.

### 3.3 Professional learning: Areas where progress has been made

- Senior Officers now hold Chair positions across a number of all Wales groups; this supports their ongoing professional development.
- Monthly 121 performance coaching sessions are embedded as routine practice.
- Performance Coaching is underpinned by an effective 360 process is now also an embedded process. This also includes contributions from Headteachers for senior Officer's PDR i.e. the Corporate Director for Education and Head of School Improvement and Inclusion.
- New Headteacher and aspiring deputy induction learning offer is in place and led by an experienced Headteacher.

### 3.3 Professional learning: Areas requiring further improvement

- To engage in more formal evaluations of the impact and effectiveness of CPD for Directorate officers.
- To develop further cost neutral ways in which officers can continue to engage in professional development activity set against a backdrop of Council austerity measures.

### 3.4 Safeguarding Arrangements

**The Local Authority's systems, practice and policy demonstrate that safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements as detailed in Keeping Learners Safe.** The Managing Director has overall strategic accountability for securing effective safeguarding arrangements across the Council. The Corporate Safeguarding Policy identifies key personnel and their deputies (including elected members) across all Council services with responsibility and accountability for safeguarding. The Council has a well-established Joint Safeguarding Scrutiny Committee in place that scrutinises safeguarding performance across the Council's services and also involves key partners. CLT monitors arrangements closely, including Professional Strategy Meeting (PSM) progress. The strategic leads group keeps safeguarding arrangements under close scrutiny and is key in implementing the WAO action plan on safeguarding arrangements. Within this audit no key areas for the education service were identified as requiring improvement.

**Clear lines of accountability and reporting are in place.** Named officers with clear responsibilities and accountabilities are in place. At Directorate level the Strategic Safeguarding in Education lead (SSL) is Michelle Jones and the Deputy is Claire Gardner. The Safeguarding in Education Manager is Sarah Dixon with responsibility for the operational management and oversight of child protection and safeguarding issues in education, particularly for schools. This post is located within the Social Services Directorate and is line Manager by the Children's Services Manager with responsibility for Safeguarding.

The Designated Senior Person for Youth Service is Claire Madden and for Early Years and Play, Claire Smith. The matrix evidences that all schools have a designated senior person DSP, a deputy DSP and a designated governor for safeguarding. All of the above ensure that there are clear reporting structures in place for each of the settings aligned to the Safeguarding in Education policy. All schools have a designated Lead for Children Looked After (CLA) who work closely with the CLA Education Coordinator and Mentors. The contact information is reviewed every September to ensure appropriate structures are in place in each setting.

Monthly meetings between the Strategic Safeguarding in Education Lead and the Safeguarding in Education Manager provides the mechanism for supporting a coherence in approach and consistency of practice. The Professional Lead for Community Safety, who is the Council's Community safety and Preventing Violent Extremism lead, joins for part of these meeting to ensure that any broader community safety issues are shared and a joint multi-agency approach implemented. Regular meetings with corporate officers supports a coherence of approach, for example, the Safeguarding in Education Manager meets termly with the early years and play, youth service, home to school transport, and school DSP's.

**The Education Safeguarding Policy is updated annually and most recently during the Summer term 2021 and covers all education settings.** The effectiveness and impact of policies is monitored through regular review of the findings captured in the safeguarding matrix. Similarly, this information is contained in the quarterly reports for Safeguarding presented to the Education and Social Services Joint Scrutiny Committee. Findings feed the ongoing work programme for the Safeguarding in Education Manager.

Monitoring of safeguarding procedures have been enhanced by the development of a Quality Assurance protocol for validating processes across education services and a reporting timeframe into DMT. Learning from these visits informs future policy and practice. The Safeguarding in Education Manager visits schools and other

settings throughout the year, currently taking place on a virtual basis. **The statutory Partnership Agreement makes clear schools' obligations regarding safeguarding.** Adoption is monitored via close scrutiny of the Matrix. The annual return from commissioned services demonstrated that all services have appropriate safeguarding policies and practice in place. (EAS, GEMS, Youth Offending, SRS, and Gwent Music). Evaluation of the joint quarterly report identifies any emerging trends which are used by the Safeguarding in Education Manager to directly inform her work in schools.

Schools are supported in their early intervention and prevention work through the provision of the Families First social worker in school model. From September 2020, Families First have increased their provision from two to four social workers designated to support pupils, teaching staff and families. The service is provided on a weekly basis to each school and from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021, carried out 124 school consultations.

The role of the social workers in schools has evolved to meet the needs and demands of each school and its pupils and includes signposting families to a range of services including: Ar Trac – Cyfannol Women's Aid; New Pathways; GP; Sparkles; SNAP Cymru; Flying Start; NYAS; Supporting People; ELSA support; transition support to college; School Health Nurse; Family Matters Mediation; Bereavement services; REACH; PlatFform; and Umbrella Cymru; The role has also supported the establishment of support groups for LGBTQ+ and bereavement.

Initial evaluations confirm that school staff have felt more upskilled in dealing with the difficulties and challenges families are experiencing. The Children Missing in Education Policy has been implemented in all schools. In 2020/21 there were 37 CME referrals for pupils in Blaenau Gwent that left without a destination school. All of these pupils (except 3) have been located and the CTF has been sent to the receiving school. Of the 3 children not located, 2 have only recently moved and we are chasing up with the new local authority and the other one has been referred to HMRC – who confirmed that they had a new address for the family.

In 2020/21 there were 22 CME referrals for children that had moved into Blaenau Gwent without a forwarding school. 6 of those children were EHE when they moved into the LA. 4 of the 6 are travellers and visits have been undertaken, whilst the other 2 are due to apply for school. 3 children are still waiting to be admitted into school, as parents delayed completing the in-year transfer form, despite numerous visits. 9 children were placed into school and the referring agency notified. 3 children were in Blaenau Gwent for only a short period of time and were tracked into a new local authority. Legal procedures have commenced for one family as they are not engaging with the admission process.

In June 2021 there were also 170 year-6 pupils that had not applied for secondary school places. Work was done to support these families and ensure applications etc. were completed. There are still 9 children that we are still waiting for confirmation from other local authorities or still supporting with applications. In June 2021 there were 15 nursery pupils that had not applied to reception. Numerous visits were made and all these children have now completed applications for reception or confirmation has been received from other local authorities to say they have school places. In addition to this there were 137 pupils on the live birth data that had not applied for reception places. All except 31 have now been located. Investigations are currently ongoing for these 31 with other local authorities and then we will liaise with health and HMRC to see what further information they have.

Annual visits by LA Officers to EHE pupils provide valuable information regarding the efficiency of the education provided. This is in line with the EHE policy that was reviewed and adopted by the Executive Committee in 2017/18. Support is offered to reintegrate or to signpost. However, EHE numbers have increased following COVID-19 in line with national trends. Home visits are offered, parents who refuse are few. Neutral venues are offered and School Attendance Orders are considered.

Information about pupils who are subject to or witness to police attended incidents of domestic abuse is shared through Operation Encompass in addition to the usual reporting mechanism. Headteachers report that Operation Encompass is helpful to them in their daily work supporting pupils at risk. From 1.1.20 to 31.8.20, there were 454 occurrences involving 553 children. 17% of these children were involved in more than one incident. Seven of these occurrences were categorised as high risk and involved 9 children. From 1.9.20 to 31.3.21, there were 383 occurrences involving 454 children. 18% of these children were involved in more than one incident and 13 children were linked to high risk occurrences.

Information about pupils who experience / or who are affected by high risk domestic abuse is shared via representation by Education Welfare Service on MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference).

During 2020/21, Education were represented at most case conferences, with attendance being 94%, compared to 83% the previous year. Conferences have been held on a virtual platform for the whole academic year which has helped facilitate greater attendance. Any non-attendance is discussed on an individual basis with each setting. There has also been an increase in the number of education reports provided for conference with the majority (60%) of settings providing a report. Individual discussions with settings continues in order to improve compliance in the provision of conference reports from education.

Legislation (the Children (Performances and Activities) (Wales) Regulations 2015) regarding child performances came into force in Wales. Whilst Blaenau Gwent was compliant with legislation for those pupils that performed for larger companies, the data clearly demonstrates a growing awareness of the legislative requirements under these regulations and the associated work undertaken to identify the range of amateur dramatic groups. Consequently, as training has been implemented, there has been an increase in the number of licences issued and notification of appearances of children performing under BOPA. This work is kept under review.

Blaenau Gwent's anti-bullying strategy and toolkit provides support to schools when tackling alleged bullying in Blaenau Gwent schools. The local authority has a clear Behaviour Strategy, based on inclusive principles which underpin process and procedure, written within the context of a range of policies, provided by Welsh Government. Monitoring and reporting arrangements are in place to ensure the local authority is able to respond appropriately to incidents of bullying in schools.

Monitoring of racist incidents is carried out on a termly basis, monitored by the Inclusion team. Further wider partnership engagement with organisations such as Show Racism the Red Card and the Ethnic Minority Youth Support Team in Wales (EYST) takes place to support schools and individuals affected. The local authority has provided all schools with Restrictive Physical Intervention (RPI) and reduced timetable guidance. All reported incidents of RPI are scrutinised and recorded by the appropriate Officer and follow up actions carried out. Such incidents are recorded within the Inclusion data and are also reported to joint scrutiny. The local authority also monitors reduced timetables, ensuring appropriate support and planning takes place.

Processes dealing with allegations against professionals are managed by the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Unit in Social Services in accordance with Wales Safeguarding Procedures (WSP). The systems are embedded and WSP, Welsh Government guidance and Gwent Safeguarding Board guidance underpins this work. The Safeguarding in Education Manager reports the current position to DMT, which is then shared by the Corporate Director with CLT.

The Recruitment and Selection Policy, Safer Recruitment for Schools is considerate of safe recruitment principles for supply staff. This policy has been adopted by school Governing Bodies. The process for managing DBS compliance is embedded across education services and schools. DBS compliance is managed by Organisational Development and any non-compliance is escalated and managed by Directors and senior managers in all departments. CLT receive quarterly DBS position statement and this is also shared with Corporate Safeguarding Leads.

Early years have an established safeguarding quality assurance processes. Analysis of this is a feature of safeguarding meetings with this service and joint visits have been implemented with the Safeguarding in Education Manager. In addition, early year's childcare and play staff have systems in place to monitor the uptake of relevant safeguarding training with all DSPs in these settings being trained.

Evaluation of the Matrix reveals that all schools have updated their whole school safeguarding training within the last 3 years. The matrix reveals that all DSPs have had training and nearly all have refreshed their training in the past 3 years.. DSP training is also supplemented through regular updates provided during termly DSP meetings.

PREVENT training continues to be offered to schools and settings and in the governor training offer. Training for governors is offered through the BG specific EAS training programme and upon direct request from schools. Group 1 Training for VAWDASV was rolled out to educational settings in early 2018. Specific Blaenau Gwent education sessions for Group 2 Ask and Act training have taken place during March 2021.

Keeping Safe Online: By the end of the academic year 2020-21, all schools had registered with the 360 degree safe Cymru tool, with 68% of these having completed all aspects of the tool. Work needs to continue to promote the ongoing use of the tool.

The Council are currently in the process of the roll-out the MyConcern safeguarding system across all of the schools in 2020-21. Over 90% of BG's schools are engaged in the roll-out and the team are working towards 100% implementation.

Youth Workers and Counsellors promote the social, personal and emotional development of young people in a safe space; this proves highly effective in promoting the improved wellbeing of young people. Safeguarding processes are established in the Youth Service. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place, with records kept on all safeguarding matters including Multi-Agency Referrals to Social Services, feedback and staff training.

Termly meetings are held between the Youth Service and the Safeguarding in Education Officer; emerging trends are highlighted to inform practice. All Youth Service staff have received training in Prevent.

The Local Authority has a comprehensive range of Health and Safety policies, procedures and guidance in place, which clearly sets out the management of Health and Safety, both at a Corporate, Directorate/school management level.

All schools have competent persons such as first aiders and educational visits co-ordinators to manage any risks. The Local Authority and schools meet the standards set out in HSE and WG guidance for Educational Visits.

Exemplar policies are provided for Drug and Substance Misuse and Sex and Relationships Education. Monitoring of policy through to practice is undertaken with training and resources are provided to deliver health topics.

In addition, following an increase in violence and aggression and more extreme incidents a threat to staff protocol has been developed and shared with schools which has been supported through presentations by partners at Headteacher meeting on matters such as knife crime.

Arrangements for educational visits are effective and improving because: the revised Educational Visits Policy (2017) is in line with the Outdoor Education Advisers Panel National Guidance (OEAPNG); the Outdoor Advisers monitors all trips and visits and reports to Head of Service, indicating the level of authorised school visits on a monthly basis; and, all schools are complying with the EVOLVE system. School visits to high footfall areas now include the terrorist threat risk assessment as part of the EVOLVE process.

Evaluations of approaches to prevent CYP from being drawn into terrorism activities indicates that all DSP's in schools had received WRAP training. In addition, the Education Safeguarding policy contains a policy statement on community cohesion and a further policy briefing has been developed for schools Respect and Resilience (Preventing Extremism).

Following the step change in terrorist tactics following the attack in Manchester and the attacks in London led to a review that saw Terrorist Threats considered as part of the school's risk assessment for visits to 'high footfall' areas. A Respect and Resilience Action Plan has been devised and implemented; the plan identifies the key areas from an Education Directorate perspective, including the Youth Service.

#### **3.4 Safeguarding Arrangements: Areas where progress has been made**

- **The Safeguarding Matrix approach to capturing information is helpful and supports the ongoing improvement in practice in this area.**
- **The close working arrangements between Education and Social Services have developed well, further supporting a coherence of approach regarding safeguarding in schools and settings. The Safeguarding Policy is regularly reviewed and understood by key stakeholders.**
- **Recent work to respond to community safety issues, counter potential terrorism and extremist behaviours has progressed well, for example, the Safer School Partnership, the Respect and Resilience Action Plan.**
- **The Operation Encompass work has progressed very well and supports schools in this regard.**
- **Quality assurance processes to test the robustness of safeguarding processes have been implemented and inform ongoing work in this area.**
- **The Safeguarding Policy and 360-degree Safe Cymru Policy has been agreed by the Executive and implemented in all schools, work needs to continue to promote the ongoing use of the toolkit.**
- **The new Council Policy requiring all school Governors to be DBS cleared is being implemented.**

#### **3.4 Safeguarding Arrangements: Areas requiring further improvement**

- **Continue to develop policy and practice that is responsive to emerging school concerns in line with the Vision for Education of school led improvement in a contextual safeguarding approach.**
- **Full implementation of VAWDASV (Group 1) training needs to be achieved at school level, as well as the implementation of Group 2 training across all LGES settings.**
- **Digitalisation of the safeguarding matrix to be developed and streamlined to enable greater readability.**



- **Provide greater flexibility in the training offer to increase the uptake of safeguarding training by school governors.**
- **Roll-out of the MyConcern software across all of BG's schools, since revenue funding was secured in early 2020.**
- **Review the Safeguarding self-evaluation report and areas for development, presented the Scrutiny Committee in the Summer 2021.**

### 3.5 Use of resources

**The Council is of the view that this investment is fundamental to securing improvements in educational outcomes and wellbeing. Sound financial planning underpins recent financial management and increasingly evidences better value for money.** The Education Directorate has a new and vibrant leadership team with a permanent Corporate Director of Education and Head of School Improvement appointed during academic year 2020-21. This restructure has also created new roles for Service Manager Education Transformation and Business Change and Young People and Partnerships and this has created additional capacity, especially for the school improvement agenda. The new leadership has a progressive working relationship with the Resources/Finance team.

**The Education Portfolio Budget for 2021/22 is £59.7m. Education is a priority in the Corporate Improvement Plan and the Council agreed a 3.3% increase to the ISB for this financial year and in addition, the ISB was increased due to an increase in pupil numbers.**

**The provisional revenue out-turn for 2020/21 reported a favourable variance of £351,000 against a budget of £57.7m** and this was due to a number of reasons: the impact of Covid-19 on services was the primary driver for lower than normal spend. This manifested itself through reduced costs in for example, Home to School/Home to College Transport and additional grants from Welsh Government, totalling £3.2m for both revenue and capital.

**The Council to date have successfully drawn down £20.25m from the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Band A programme and secured appropriate match funding for the immediate projects under Band B;** the Directorate will propose further match funding amounts annually thereafter.

This programme is a priority in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). Education's capital budget out-turn position for 2020-21 was balanced and an additional £1.3m was secured for the Six Bells new school build project. WG has also recently given their 'in-principle' support for a Band B programme that would result in an additional investment of £19.6m into the school estate. The 65/35 intervention rate is helpful. WG has recently awarded the Council £825,000 for the Education Maintenance Capital Grant for 20-21.

The Council's Executive approved an ICT business case for a new delivery model, which will address existing gaps and ensure future sustainability of the ICT infrastructure and connectivity across the Blaenau Gwent school estate. The proposal has been created in line with Welsh Government's strategic perspectives for digital competency across Wales. The capital elements of the project circa £600,000 are jointly funded by the schools and central education budget via prudential borrowing. A new schools' SLA with the Shared Resources Services (SRS) and the additional revenue costs have been agreed with schools. This project will ensure that all schools and their learners have consistency of access to ICT provision that meets the requirements of WG's Digital Competency Framework (DCF). The implementation of the project has been now completed following an implementation plan and delivery programme over an 18-month period.

Additionally, WG has awarded £2m to complement the aforementioned ICT infrastructure project with £900,000 confirmed for FY19/20 and a further £1m over the next 2 years. This funding has also been used to upgrade school devices and the Directorate continue to work with schools to secure their device replacement sustainability plans.

Regular finance meetings between the Resources Accountant, the Corporate Director and relevant budget holders provide opportunity to discuss financial matters, budget forecasts, schools causing concern, cost pressures etc. and quarterly budget monitoring reports are presented to Corporate Leadership, Joint budget Scrutiny, Executive Committee for scrutiny, monitoring and challenge. For cost pressures, action plans are developed and monitored monthly via the Corporate Cost pressure sub-group.

**The Individual Schools Budget (ISB) for 2021/22 is £46.5m. Overall surplus balances increased in 20/21 primarily due to the impact of Covid-19 on schools spend and additional WG grant allocations;** as shown in the table below:

2018/19	2019/20	2020/21 (provisional out turn)
£1.05 m Surplus	£1.32 m surplus	£3.68m surplus as at 05.08.21

Pupil Numbers:

sector	Sept 2016	Sept 2017	Sept 2018	Sept 2019	Sept 2020
secondary	1,351	1,361	1,335	1,394	1,343
middle	2,806	2,782	2,773	2,791	2,811
primary	4,450	4,454	4,523	4,470	4,417
special	105	139	153	165	168
total	8,712	8,736	8,784	8,820	8,739

**The growth in pupil numbers is reflected in the growth trend in the ISB in recent years from £41.5m in 2017/2018 to £46.5m in 2021/2022**

P104 (P108)– Surplus/(Deficit) Summary as at 05.08.21

Sector	2019 - 2020	2020 - 2021
Secondary	£336,432	£810,014
Middle	(£829,421)	(£259,758)
Primary	£1,532,120	£2,744,327
Special	£286,016	£387,088
Total	£1,054,512	£3,681,671

During the 2020/21 financial year a review of school funding was undertaken which suggested that the funding should be moved between the sectors in the 2020/21 financial year. This was agreed on a phased basis. The movement in funding for 21/22 is shown overleaf:

Sector	Funding Change
Secondary	+£67,000
Middle	+£46,000
Primary	-£115,000
Special	+£2,000
Total	£0

Schools forecasting a deficit budget are required to develop a medium term deficit reduction plan, which is approved by the Headteacher, Chair of Governors, Corporate Director of Education and Chief Officer Resources. These plans are monitored and regular meetings are held between the School Support Officer and the Headteacher. School Balances report is presented to Education DMT and CLT on a termly basis. Schools with balances in excess of the prescribed amounts, are required to submit spending plans in accordance with delivering school improvement.

The School Budget Forum is effective in championing the resource management matters for schools and the Forum has the opportunity to feedback to the Council on strategic resource considerations that are facing schools. All schools have bought into the Council's SLA for financial support, with each school having a dedicated support officer providing:

- Forecast financial information for a number of years
- Budget modelling & Planning
- Support with SIMS
- Provision of financial information to present to Governor
- Grant monitoring
- Financial Support
- Finance Training

**The Council's total gross budgeted expenditure per pupil for 2021/22 is £6,980 which is the 2nd highest in Wales and £593 above the Welsh average of £6,387. This is made up of delegated gross expenditure of £5,962 across all sectors (1<sup>st</sup> in Wales), which is £637 above the Wales average of £5,325 and central expenditure of £1,017 per pupil and £45 above the Welsh average. When compared to the family of similar local authorities, delegated gross expenditure is ranked highest, with central funding ranking lowest.**

**For 2021/22 the funding delegated to schools was 85.4% which is above the all Wales average and ranked 1st when compared to the family of schools. (Local Authority Budgeted Expenditure on Schools 2021/22).**

The ALN provision expansion model amounting to approximately £6M revenue is a programme clearly prioritised at need. Blaenau Gwent accommodates some of the highest level of SEN need in Wales. Outcomes and progress for pupils presenting with statements of SEN are good and more variable for pupils at SA and SA+ (A1.1).

Out of County Placements (OOC): In line with the revised model for ALN provision, the process for approving out of county placements has been strengthened. Blaenau Gwent ALN students are appropriately placed and there have been no tribunals in recent years. This budget is monitored closely and offset by income from recoupment for pupils placed in settings in Blaenau Gwent. The 20/21 provisional out turn is an overspend of £34,000.

The School Budget Forum has been effective in carrying out focussed pieces of work such as: debating the funding formula for schools, which central budgets can be delegated to schools; providing feedback on the budget setting process and service level agreements, the process for the clawback of funding and the establishment of a Premature Redundancy/Retirement budget (PRC Budget)

**The Council has been very successful in accessing external funding. Council's Youth Service is ranked 12<sup>th</sup> in Wales for core funded expenditure per head for youth population but raises to 2<sup>nd</sup> when including external grant expenditure.** The Youth Service has accessed European Social Fund (ESF) financial support for the Inspire 2 Achieve and Inspire 2 Work initiatives.

The LA compares its performance across a range of indicators with its Family of LAs; namely RCT, MT, CCBC and NPT. Pupil outcomes and LA Rank is used to compare performance in BG and help support value for money judgements. However, the availability of LA aggregated data going forward will present as a challenge due to changes in the publication of data associated with the removal of high stakes accountability systems and in line with the National Reform agenda.

The adoption of a pupil-led formula for placement in ALN resource bases has reduced the number of surplus staffed places and has introduced a flexible model which responds to changing needs. Through the review of resource bases, provision for ASD and SEBD is secured in line with emerging demand within existing budget revenues. Close working with Headteachers has ensured collective commitment and ownership of these significant changes.

**The FADE evaluation illustrates that there are robust Corporate and Directorate resource management arrangements in place that is contributing to an improving value for money assessment. This evaluative judgement is evidenced through the following;**

- **A balanced 2021-22 capital budget and relatively minor revenue underspend out-turn position;**
- **Education is a corporate priority in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and revenue and capital budgets have been largely protected during the difficult financial climate;**
- **There are effective leadership and management arrangements in place to monitor and plan for resource management across the Council, and indeed, within the Education Directorate;**
- **The ISB and schools' financial position is clearly understood and schools that are in surplus/deficit situations are challenged and supported well; and,**
- **Overall value for money is improving, linked to improvements in school categorisation and performance overall.**

**In 2020/21 the Youth Service** was funded partly through a core budget of £372,000 and external grants of £1,158,000 (from ESF - European Social Fund, Positive Futures and Welsh Government Youth Support Grant). Therefore, the total income for the Youth Service in 2020/21 was £1,530,000. All grants have been secured for the next financial year, with the ESF funding secured up until 2022 and additional funding sourced from Welsh Government to enhance the youth work offer to young people around youth homelessness and mental health.

The reliance on external funding is identified as a risk. Securing ESF monies until 2022 provides some stability for targeted services. However, the majority of grants are funded on an annual basis, with annual action plans, which does not allow long term financial planning. This has been flagged up as a concern and needs to be considered in future planning.

The Youth Service's core revenue budget is effectively used to employ a small core team to access and administer external grants to meet identified need. These grants include European Social Funding, Welsh Government Youth Support Grant, Positive Futures and Children in Need. The grants enable the service to provide support to the most vulnerable young people in the community through providing individual tailored support as needed.

**Other areas:**

**SLAs with schools; the Council will be working with schools to renew the 3 year SLA arrangements with schools from the Summer 2021 for implementation from April 2022. This is circa £3m worth of buy-back business from schools to the Council across 16 SLAs.**

**EAS: The Council commissions the EAS to deliver the statutory functions of school improvement. The annual financial costs being £351,000 which has reduced over the last 3 years. Schools categorisation profile has improved over the last 5 years against a backdrop of decreasing contributions to the EAS: this effectively represents good value for money.**

SENCOM: the financial contribution had been renegotiated last year via a review conducted by WLGA. The Council currently contributes the reviewed amount of £247,000 (previously £252,000). This again represents good value for money as progress of our statemented pupils is generally good.

GEMS: WG grant for £32,000 (MEAG) is transferred to GEMS: pupil outcomes and progress is very good; hence, the service provides very good value for money.

CAPITA: The existing contract with CAPITA was £92,000 for the CAPITA ONE programme; however, following negotiations with CAPITA the new contract from 21/22 will now reduce to £75,000 (a reduction of £17,000 per annum or £85,000 over 5 years) and has additional modules such as on-line admission arrangements as well as the safeguarding module MyConcern. This agreement was signed off at the end of January 2020. This represents another example of how the Directorate secures good value for money and a new focus on commercial activity.

### 3.5 Use of Resources: Areas where progress has been made

- **The school's Individual Schools Budget (ISB) has been prioritised. Schools have been given a 3.3% uplift for 21/22. Capital has been secured to match fund the 21st Century Schools Programme. Overall, schools have healthy balances across the school estate.**
- **Effective Education leadership team in place, which has also generated revenue savings.**
- **Financial Efficiency Savings: devised, approved and budget agreed for 2020/21. No additional savings are required for FY 21/22.**
- **SENCom Review on-going – BG contributed extensively to the review and support the findings.**
- **GEMS provide good value for money.**
- **Arrangements with the regional Education Achievement Service (EAS) provide good value for money.**

- There is good engagement of Blaenau Gwent elected members in the governance arrangements of the EAS; thereby effectively holding the EAS to account e.g. termly Exec/CLT briefings.
- Use of resources i.e. Education staffing have been significantly streamlined to ensure greater value for money.
- 21st Century Band B Programme has been approved and is in implementation phase.
- The Education Transformation, Youth Service and Inclusion Services provide good value for money.
- Schools have worked strategically with the Directorate to establish a Premature Retirement Contribution budget for staff terminations.
- Majority of schools have signed up to the 3 year SLA arrangement for support services with the Council up to 2022.

### 3.5 Use of Resources: areas requiring improvement

- The corporate 'Bridging the Gap' programme implementation to facilitate greater effectiveness and efficiencies, where available.
- To review the Education Directorate Professional Learning Programme so that it provides an effective, overarching strategy; which links professional learning with the findings of self-evaluation and the broad aims of the Directorate.
- Continue to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of staff professional learning on outcomes, wellbeing, provision and the quality of leadership of LGES e.g. FADEs.
- The viability of other SEWC regional services needs to be kept under close review to ensure sustainability and value for money going forward e.g. SENCom review.
- Schools balances in the secondary/primary sectors have increased in one school, but needs to be kept under close review going forward; timely support to be provided by the Council through the ALC Corporate Group.
- To escalate the risk level for Youth Service's funding position as ESF comes to an end in 2022. The Shared Prosperity Fund is being explored.
- There will need to be close monitoring and support for schools predicting surplus and deficit budgets, particularly for the two all-through schools.
- Effective monitoring of the out of county placement and home to school transport revenue budgets is required.
- Facilitating robust Service Level Agreements (SLAs) and partnership arrangements with key partners, such as the EAS to ensure effective and sustainable provision for schools.
- SLA renewal with schools by April 2022, which is circa £3m+ income to the Council.