

Committee: **Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee**
Date of meeting: **19th October 2021**
Report Subject: **Pupil Exclusions**
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Joanne Collins, Executive Member for Education**
Report Submitted by: **Lynn Phillips, Corporate Director of Education**

Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
29.09.21	30.09.21	07.10.21			19.10.21	10.11.21		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide opportunity for Members to scrutinise internal exclusion data for Blaenau Gwent in both the primary and secondary school sectors for the academic year 2020-21, as well as the regional exclusion data for the academic year 2019-20.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The key Exclusion Guidance is the Welsh Government Guidance entitled: 'Exclusion from Schools and Pupil Referral Units' (Updated November 2019).
- 2.2 By law (section 52(4) of the Education Act 2002), headteachers, governing bodies, LAs and independent appeal panels must have regard to this guidance when making decisions on exclusion and administering the exclusion procedures and appeals. There is a strong expectation that the guidance will be followed unless there is good reason to depart from it.
- 2.3 The guidance is very helpful and very prescriptive. For example, the guidance states that only the headteacher can exclude a learner and that unofficial exclusions – sending learners home unofficially – is unlawful. This approach means that the Education Directorate's guidance to schools, and the practice in place in schools, reflects the processes set out in the WG guidance.
- 2.4 The WG guidance includes template letters for informing parents following an exclusion, and at every stage of the exclusion disciplinary process.
- 2.5 The Council's Exclusion Guidance for schools, as well as including much of the WG guidance, provides additional local information such as process flowcharts, a standardised reporting format and a checklist for head teachers to ensure that the decision to exclude has been carefully considered and is being used as a last resort.

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

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 The options for Scrutiny to consider are:

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

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

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

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

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

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

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 *Impact on Budget*

5.1.1 The Council is required by the Education Act 1996 to ensure that pupils who have been permanently excluded are in receipt of an appropriate education after fifteen days. If an alternative mainstream school is not appropriate then it becomes necessary to arrange a placement in either an out of county special school or our SEBD (social, emotional and behaviour difficulties) school. There are of course significant cost implications with placing a pupil out of county. In terms of in county placement, which is always the preferred option, tuition costs may be incurred whilst placement is being facilitated. There are no budgetary implications in terms of fixed term exclusions although schools make provision to meet pupil need from within their own budgets to avoid or reduce the likelihood of fixed term exclusions.

5.2 **Risk**

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

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

- 5.2.3
 - Undetected and unaddressed decline in school performance and the quality of provision
 - Students do not achieve to acceptable levels
 - Lack of overall improvement in schools' performance
 - Negative impact on the reputation of the Council

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

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

5.2.5 **Mitigating factors**

There is a need to introduce a number of measures to support schools to reduce exclusions. Please see section, **The Inclusion Service Priorities to Improve Exclusions**

5.3 **Legal**

There are no legal implications for this report.

5.4 **Human Resources**

There are no human resources implications arising from this report.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 Performance Information and Data

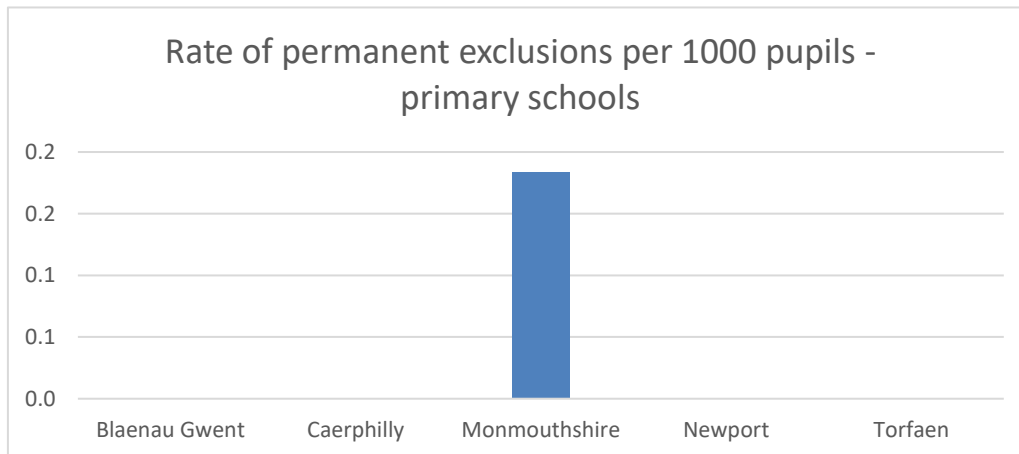
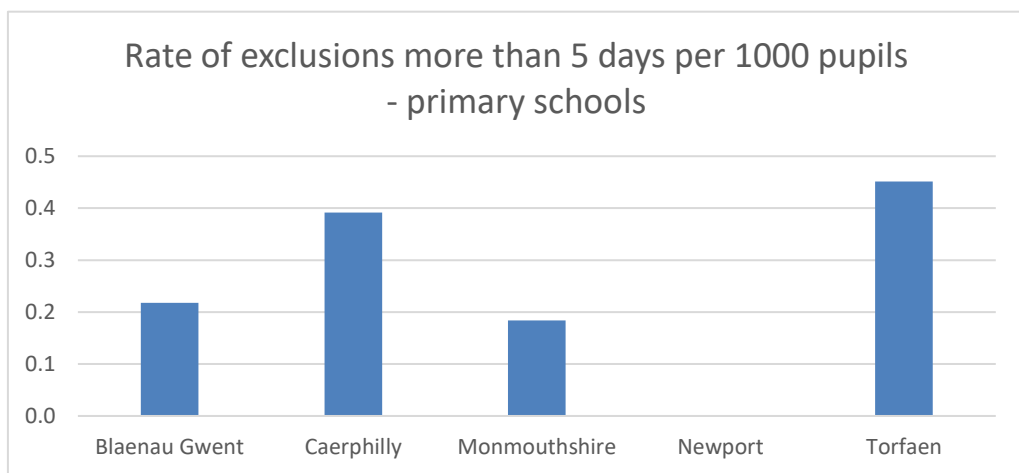
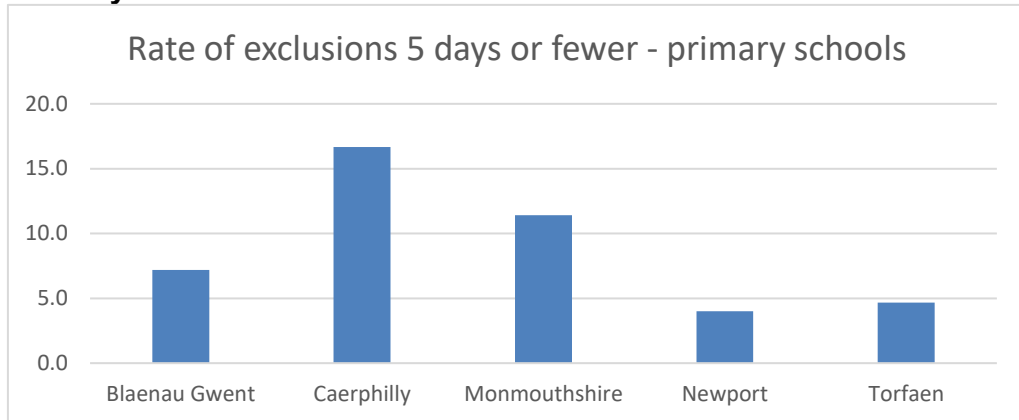
6.1.2 **The National Analysis**

The last Welsh Government data published in October 2020, reported on national 2018/19 data and this information has previously been presented to Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee.

6.1.3 **The SEWC Regional Analysis**

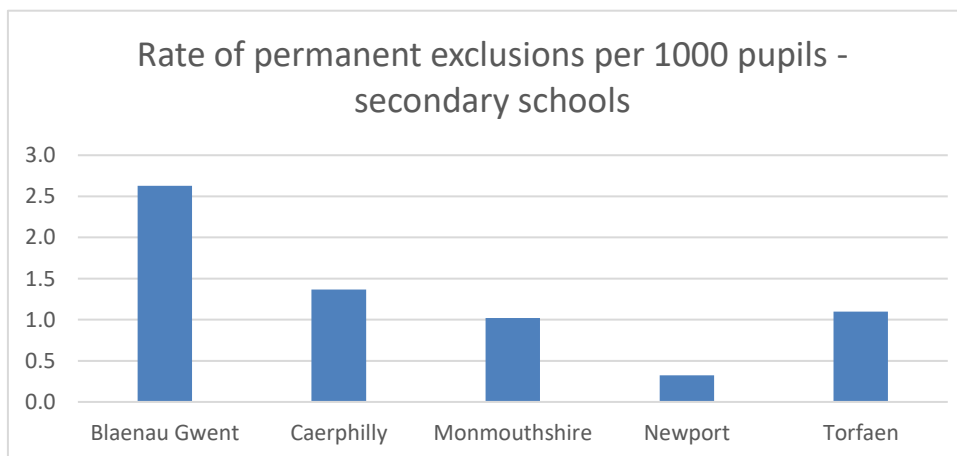
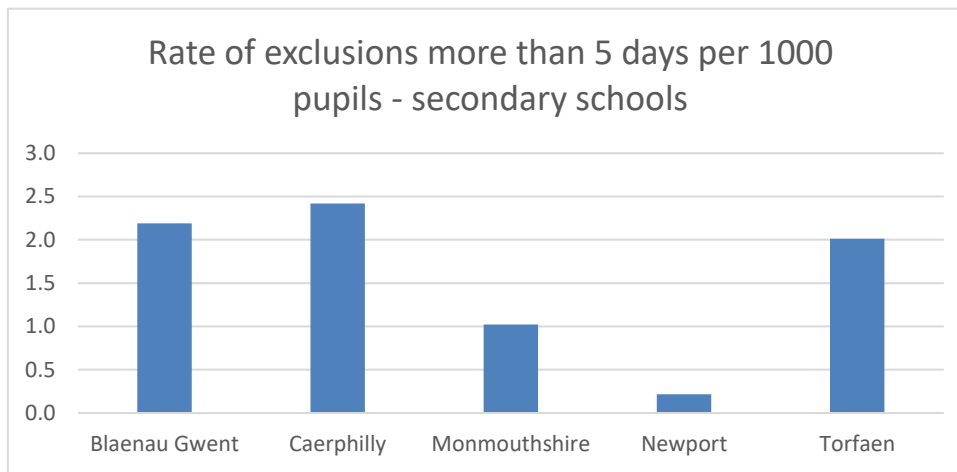
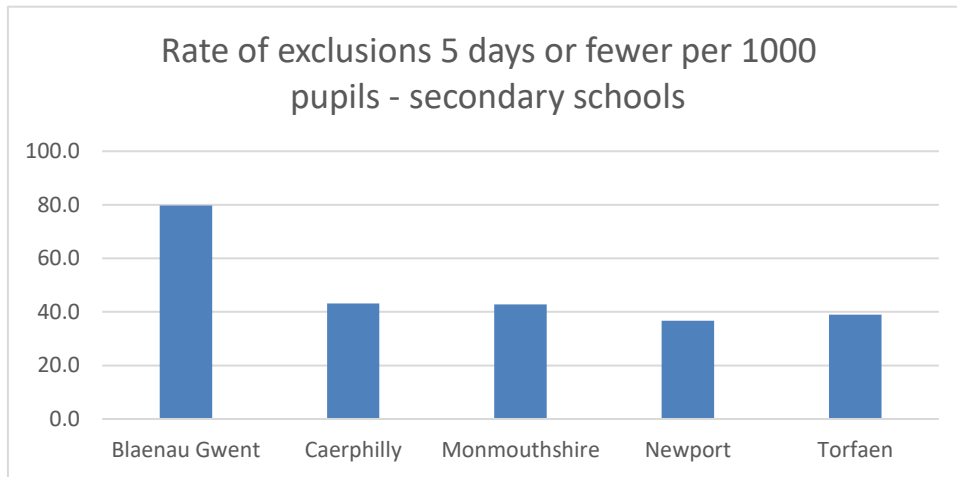
The SEWC regional comparisons are available for the 19/20 academic year as detailed overleaf

6.1.4 Primary Schools



6.1.5 For rate of 6 days or more and 5 days or less Blaenau Gwent was 3/5 (where 1 is the least excluding). The rate of exclusions per 1,000 pupils was 0.2 and 7.2 respectively. There were no primary permanent exclusions in Blaenau Gwent.

6.1.6 Secondary Schools



6.1.7 For rate of 6 days or more Blaenau Gwent was 4/5 and for 5 days or less Blaenau Gwent was 3/5 (where 1 is the least excluding). The rate of exclusions per 1,000 pupils was 2.2 and 79.7 respectively. The rate of secondary permanent exclusions in Blaenau Gwent was also the highest at a rate of 2.6 per 1,000 pupils.

6.1.8 Exclusion - Analysis Over 4 Years

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

6.1.9 Number of Exclusions:

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
KS3 & KS4	464	446	306	160
5 days or less	450	433	295	155
6 days or more	14	13	11	5
FP & KS2	52	68	67	33
5 days or less	52	64	63	33
6 days or more	0	4	4	0
Total	516	514	373	193

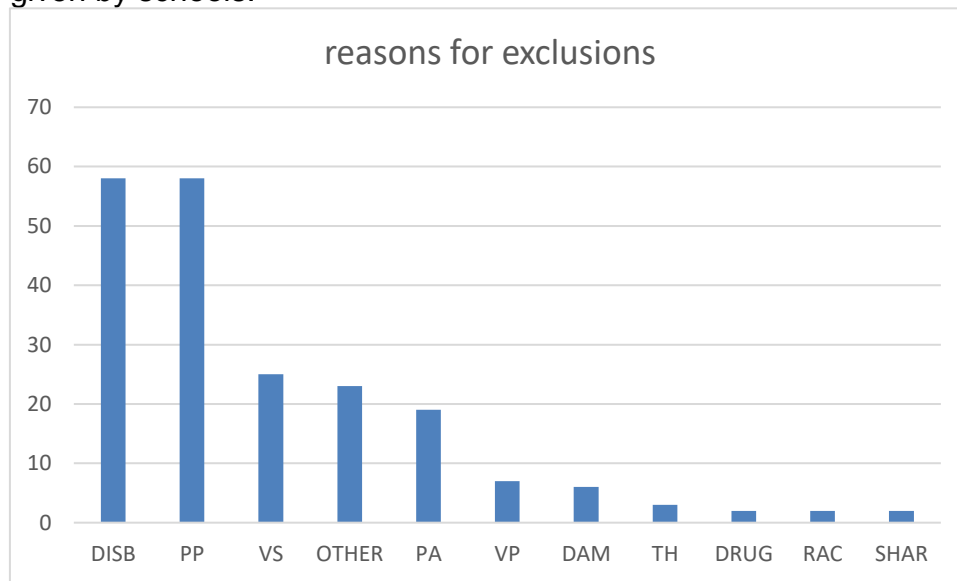
6.1.10 Number of Days:

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
KS3 & KS4	872	763	544	259.5
5 days or less	766.5	628.5	430.5	225.5
6 days or more	105.5	134.5	113.5	34
FP & KS2	84.5	225.5	137	47.5
5 days or less	84.5	174.5	111.5	47.5
6 days or more	0	51	25.5	0
Total	956.5	988.5	681	307

6.1.11 Overall, BG have seen a decrease in exclusions in 2020/21 compared to the previous year. However, it is important to note that schools were not open for all pupils between December and March due to the COVID response.

6.1.12 Number of Exclusions by Reason

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



KEY

DISB - Persistent disruptive behaviour

PP - Physical Assault against pupil

VS - Verbal abuse / threatening behaviour against an adult

OTHER – Other

PA - Physical assault against adult

VP - Verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against a pupil

DAM – Damage

TH - Theft

DRUG – Drugs/Alcohol

BUL - Bullying

RAC - Racial abuse

SHAR – Sexual Harassment

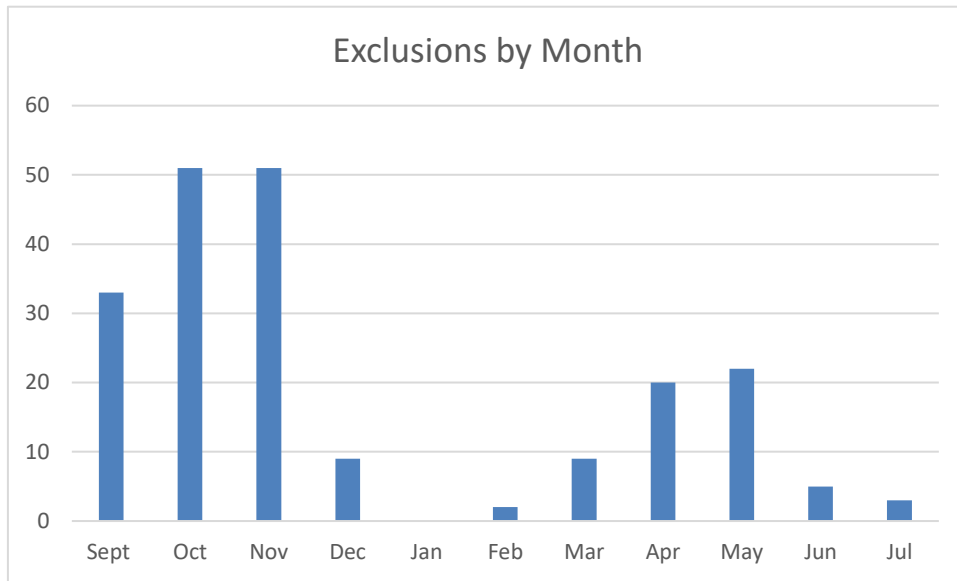
6.1.13 In terms of reasons for exclusion, the main reasons have remained largely unchanged and in line with national trends:

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

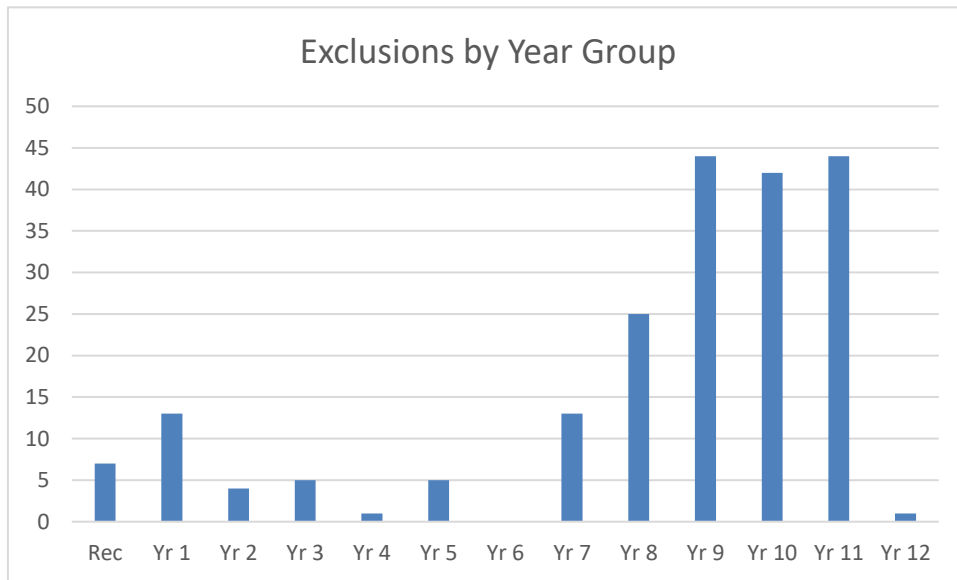
6.1.14 At Primary, the main reason for exclusion was physical assault against a pupil (PP), and accounted for 47% of exclusions.

6.1.15 At Secondary, the main reason for exclusion was persistent disruptive behaviour (DISB), and accounted for 33% of exclusions.

6.1.16 Exclusions by Month



6.1.17 Exclusions by Year Group



6.1.18 Permanent Exclusions

There were a total of six permanent exclusions in 2019/20 compared to three in 2018/19 and nine in 2017/18.

6.1.19 **Evaluation of Data and Processes**

The Inclusion team evaluation has identified the following considerations:

- Exclusions are too high and need to reduce and this has been identified in the Education Directorate's self-evaluation arrangements.
- Monitoring of pupil level exclusion data by all Inclusion teams has improved and is effective, informing EWS work and dialogue with schools.
- A regional approach to exclusions was under development but has not progressed due to COVID
- Joint working with the EAS has improved but requires further development, specifically relating to challenging schools on the use of exclusions.
- There is excellent behaviour management practice in some schools, however, this needs to be shared more readily.
- There is inconsistent use of exclusions across schools, illustrated by the varying rates of exclusions.
- The local authority arrangements for tuition need to be reviewed to ensure they fully meet need and that tuition is in place for all pupils by day 16.

6.1.20 **The Inclusion Service Priorities to Improve Exclusions**

- Developing closer working with the Principal Challenge Advisor and Challenge Advisors through the Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Group and Wider Group regarding exclusion concerns in identified schools.
- Sharing data and best practice and including actions to reduce exclusions in school support plans.
- Using resources flexibly to support initiatives that help early intervention or reduce exclusions e.g. Positive Futures School provision.
- Developing regional working as part of the SEWC ALN/Inclusion Action Plan to share good practice and facilitate regional school to school working.
- Reviewing the exclusion guidance in the light of a more pupil focused approach.
- Supporting school to school work to improve the management of behaviour across all schools and share good practice in the appropriate use of exclusions.
- Working with the River Centre to further develop the revolving door approach to support reintegration back into mainstream provision.
- Challenging schools where exclusions are too high.
- Developing a Trauma Informed Schools approach model in schools so that schools can help support pupils as opposed to punitive measures being used

- Attempting to reduce exclusions in the Foundation Phase, especially in line with the Children's Commissioner's report and implement the recommendations in the analysis section.
- Issuing the 'building blocks' toolkit to schools.
- Implementing the recommendations from the Police and Crime Commissioner's report on 'Understanding the Triggers'

6.2 **Expected outcome for the public**

A reduction in exclusions will result in pupils being able to access more education, which will support them to achieve better outcomes, which also reduces the future financial implications on other services.

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

Exclusion data is monitored regularly and forms a part of the evidence base for other teams' work within the Directorate, the EAS and other Services.

6.4 **Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)**

A focus on reducing school exclusions aligns to the Directorate and Corporate Plan. Reduced exclusion levels will have a positive impact on the life chances of children and young people, better preparing them for their future beyond their time in school.

6.5 **Preventative focus**

Reduced exclusion rates reduces the likelihood of a pupil becoming NEET and increases the likelihood of a pupil achieving well and supports pupils to reach their potential.

6.6 **Collaboration / partnership working**

Reducing exclusions has an increasingly high regional profile and is supported through the work of the EAS. Strong links exist with neighbouring LAs as well as within Blaenau Gwent services such as with Children's Services. Working in partnership with other services is fundamental to providing a co-ordinated, effective service to children and young people as well as schools.

6.7 **Integration (across service areas)**

A focus on exclusion impacts upon key objectives within Education as well as in work with Children's Services.

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

There are no adverse equality impacts in relation to the data in this report.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 Exclusions are monitored fortnightly. Annual FADEs for exclusions are prepared and data is provided to Welsh Government.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

Welsh Government Exclusion Guidance

<https://gov.wales/exclusion-schools-and-pupil-referral-units-pru>

[Permanent and fixed-term exclusions from schools in Wales, 2017/18 \(gov.wales\)](#)

List of Acronyms

EAS: Education Achievement Service

NEET: Young people not in education, employment or training

SEWC: South East Wales Consortium