

Committee: **Executive Committee**  
Date of meeting: **Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> December 2021**  
Report Subject: **Management of Pupil Places and the School Estate 2020/21**  
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr. Joanne Collins, Executive Member Education**  
Report Submitted by: **Corporate Director of Education – Lynn Phillips  
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Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
4.11.21	4.11.21	30.11.21			30.11.21	15.12.21		

1. **Purpose of the Report**  
The purpose of the report is to provide the Executive Committee with an overview of the management of pupil places and the school estate, throughout the 2020/21 academic session.
2. **Scope and Background**
  - 2.1 Capacity calculations were determined for all Blaenau Gwent schools in November 2020, which informed the final admission numbers published within the Blaenau Gwent School Admissions Policy 2022/2023.
  - 2.2 The Education Transformation team review pupil projections including surplus and sufficiency issues throughout the school estate twice per/annum. Projections are undertaken for primary schools for a 5-year period and a 7-year period for secondary schools.
  - 2.3 Pupil projection accuracy remains consistently high with 99% of secondary and 98% of primary projections in January 2021, confirmed to be accurate in September 2021.
  - 2.4 Surplus places within the primary sector has increased to 14% in January 2021, when compared to 13% in Jan 2020, however, we remain within our target, which is 15%. The increase is attributable to more pupils leaving primary school (Year 6) at the end of the 19/20 academic year than pupils starting primary school (Reception) in 20/21. This is consistent with pupil progressions expected in line with Aneurin Bevan University Health Board live birth data.
  - 2.5 There was, however, an increase in year 6 transition to secondary, which has resulted in a decrease in surplus places across the secondary sector with the percentage going from 16% in Jan 2020 to 15% in Jan 2021 (i.e. more pupils started in Year 7 than pupils leaving in Year 11). The table/graph in **Appendix 1**, demonstrates a positive position throughout the school estate, which for secondary is the lowest it has been throughout the

last 9 years. It is important to maintain a level of surplus to accommodate potential growth, along with reconfiguration of the learning environment.

- 2.6 Surplus places in both the primary and secondary sector are projected to decrease further over the next 2 years, taking the primary percentage to 12% and secondary to 10% by the 2023/24 academic session, with the overall combined status falling from 15% in Jan 2021 to 11% in 2024.
- 2.7 The School Organisation Policy (2020) sets a target of reducing surplus places to 15% across the County Borough. The primary sector is projected to remain under 15% over the next 3 years, with a slight increase to 16% expected in 2025/26, in line with a birth rate decline. The secondary sector is set to continue reduce to under 15% over the 5 years.
- 2.8 For 2019/20 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 2020/21 academic session:
- Coed y Garn Primary School - reduced admission number from 246, (which equates to 21% surplus places) to 210 (7% surplus places)
  - Ebbw Fawr Primary Campus reduced from 324 (25% surplus places) to 284 (12% surplus places)
- 2.9 The Education Transformation team's strategy for the 2021/22 academic session, is to work on the development of surplus place reduction action plans with the following schools, who are projected (as at January 2021) to have over 15% surplus between 2022/23 and 2023/24:
- Abertillery Learning Community Primary Campuses – amber category (19% - 17%)
  - Ebbw Fawr Learning Community Primary Campus – amber category (17%- 24%)
  - Glanhowy Primary School – amber category (18% - 19%)
- 2.10 There are, however, a number of our smaller schools i.e. those with 210 places and under, who we will work with to monitor the surplus and explore temporary self-help initiatives – where possible. The surplus in these schools needs to remain higher, to enable pupil population growth in line with live birth rate fluctuations, also due to the fact that a reduction in the admission number would negatively affect configuration of the teaching and learning environment and staffing levels:
- St Illtyd's Primary School (210 places)
  - Coed y Garn Primary School (210 places)
  - St Mary's R.C. Primary School (210 places)
  - Cwm Primary Schools (210 places)
  - Rhos y Fedwen Primary School (177 places)
- 2.11 Live birth rates have fluctuated over the last ten years, with a downward trend noted between 2012 and 2017 (Please refer to **Appendix 2** for more information). The Council are yet to receive the 2020/21 data from Aneurin Bevan University Health Board. Migration into Blaenau Gwent between

September 2020 and August 2021 increased with 150 pupils. 52 of which were primary pupils and 98 secondary pupils. There are a number of schools which are projected to have sufficiency issues between 2021 and 2025 as follows:

- Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg
- Abertillery Learning Community Secondary Campus
- Tredegar Comprehensive School

2.12 All 3 of the above, can and will be addressed via the annual capacity assessment, along with planned physical works which are programmed to take place over the course of the next 2 academic sessions.

2.13 In addition to the above, Ebbw Fawr Learning Community Secondary Phase, are experiencing accommodation issues aligned to configuration of the teaching and learning environment. Every space/room is being used and there is no surplus to accommodate additionally should pupil numbers grow. Therefore, a modelling exercise and growth plan are currently under development, which will seek identify options and implications associated with growth.

#### 2.14 **All Wales Position**

The latest dataset available is the January 2019 surplus place overview for Wales (please refer to **Appendix 3** for more information). Blaenau Gwent's position was as follows:

- 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.

2.15 The Council are presently awaiting the Family of Local Authority and All Wales comparative data sets for the 2019/20 and 2020/21 academic sessions.

#### 2.16 **Management of the School Estate Maintenance, Repair and Planned Works**

The Division of Responsibilities Guidance and associated procedure (Please refer to **Appendix 4**), were successfully implemented during the 2020/21 academic sessions. 433 TE100's were received between September 2020 and August 2021, 100% of which were acknowledged and received a response within 48 hours of receipt. 313 (72%) have been reported as being completed to date. All unresolved works are programmed for delivery and will be resolved by the end of the summer-term 2022, and priorities in accordingly i.e. in line with Health and Safety and operational risk levels. Delays in resolving this issues are attributable to the following:

- Market forces including material availability
- Access to school buildings in line with the schools individual COVID Secure Risk Assessments
- Programming and time constraints due to the size/scale of works and in order to minimise the potential for disruption

- Budgetary constraints and cost implications
- Securing contractors to undertake the required work
- The capacity of Technical Services to assess the extent of repair/maintenance work

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

In line with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and in the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005; the Council has a duty to monitor compliance and manage health and safety and fire risk assessment related matters in schools and education buildings.

2.18 The data below details Health & Safety and Fire Risk Assessment developments and actions undertaken throughout the 2020/21 academic session the following inspections were carried out:

- 1 Health & Safety Inspection and Fire Risk Assessment was carried out during the Autumn-term, 11 actions were identified, 7 (64%) of which have been completed.
- 2 Health & Safety Inspections and Fire Risk Assessment were carried out during the Spring-term, 22 actions were identified, 17 (77%) of which have been completed.

2.19 Actions are prioritised and monitored on a monthly basis by the Education Health and Safety Forum. Outstanding actions are programmed for resolution by the end of the summer-term 2022. In addition to the above, **Appendix 5** details the school estate Summer works programme for 2021, with 18 schools having works completed in line with their Facilities Action Plans.

#### 2.20 **Condition and Suitability**

The 2019/20 position for school building condition and suitability demonstrated continued improvement, in line with:

- The TE100 process
- Health and Safety and FRA action monitoring and implementation
- Planned Works and Structural Maintenance Programmes
- The Minor Works Programme
- 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme Delivery (along with wider education projects i.e. the ICT Infrastructure and Connectivity Project)

2.21 Condition and suitability assessment criteria range from A (good) - D (bad). Blaenau Gwent has only 1 school categorised as 'D' for condition.

**Appendix 6** highlights the latest position in respect of the Blaenau Gwent school estate. There is only one school building categorised as a 'D' (Glyncoed Primary School) within the school estate, which is being address and replaced with a new building under Band B of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme.

2.22 The 2020/21 assessment is scheduled for completion by December 2021, with the position expected to improve in terms of condition and suitability,

due to the extensive minor works and maintenance programme, along with implementation of the Council's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Band B Programme.

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

3.1 The report will be considered by the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2021, and any feedback will be presented verbally to the Executive Committee.

3.1 **Option 1:** Members considers and accepts the report.

3.2 **Option 2:** Members considers the report and provides comments relating to improvements that can be made to the current monitoring processes.

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

4.1 Education is a priority in the Council's Corporate Plan of which the planning of school places and management of the school estate are essential components. In addition, facilities management contributes to the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The Council has a statutory duty and responsibilities in line with the planning of school places and the management school Estate in line with:

- Welsh Government's Measuring the Capacity of Schools in Wales Guidance (2011)
- Welsh Government School Admission and Admission Appeals Codes (2013)
- Welsh Government School Organisation Code (2013)
- The School Standards and Framework Act 1998
- The Local Authority Financial Scheme Regulations 1998
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

4.2 The planning of school places and management of the school estate seeks to respond to the Council's wellbeing goals for all learners.

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

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

Welsh Government have indicated that there will be a further Schools Capital Maintenance Grant allocated to Local Authorities in 2021/22 financial year. The Council received a Welsh Government Schools Capital Maintenance Grant of £953,544 for the 2020/21 financial year, which alongside the minor works budget, will result in a capital investment of approximately £1,083,544 into the school estate, once all programmed works have been completed.

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

The Council have a statutory duty to comply with Welsh Government legislation and policy as detailed above. The primary risks and mitigating actions are as follows:

- Sustainability issues within the school estate– this is managed and mitigated against in line with capacity assessments, projections,

condition and suitability reviews, along with the delivery of minor and planned works programmes and school organisation.

- Ineffective distribution of pupil places and/ or insufficient places to meet demand – this managed, mitigated and informed by the capacity assessment process and pupil projections, in conjunction with the admissions process.

### 5.3 **Legal**

There are no direct legal implications associated with this report.

### 5.4 **Human Resources**

There are no direct legal implications associated with this report.

## 6. **Supporting Evidence**

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

Surplus places are set to decrease further to within and below target over the next 5 years (Please refer to **Appendix 7** for pupil projection data as at January 2021).

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

The management of pupil places aims to secure continued access to education places in Blaenau Gwent for current and future pupil populations. The management of the school estate seeks to secure improved condition and suitability of education facilities in line with the creation and management of sustainable education system in Blaenau Gwent.

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

Stakeholders and end user needs and engagement are of paramount importance to the planning of school places and management of the school estate.

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

The planning of pupil places and management of the school estate takes account of short, medium and long-term planning arrangements informing:

- Minor works and maintenance priorities
- 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools and School Organisation Priorities
- Capacity plans in line with school admissions

### 6.5 **Preventative focus**

Management of pupil places and the school estate is focused on early identification and planning, in order to secure a school estate that is fit for purpose that contributes to raising educational standards, which is a Council priority.

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

Key management and operational staff across the Council and school estate, are involved in detailed annual reviews of facilities and pupil places i.e. Education, headteachers, Health and Safety, Social Services, Community Services, Planning and Building Control, Environmental Health, Highways and Development etc.

- 6.7 **Integration (across service areas)**  
The process is cross-cutting in the sense that it impacts upon Education, Schools, Estates, Planning and Building Control, Community Services, and Social Services etc.; therefore, service area involvement is key to effective implementation.
- 6.8 **Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions**  
Any physical works planned and undertaken within education settings are planned in order to take account of decarbonisation and reducing carbon emissions.
- 6.9a **Socio Economic Duty Impact Assessment**  
The report does not involve a strategic decision covered under the act.
- 6.9b. **Equality Impact Assessment**  
EqIA screening and impact assessments are carried out on a case by case basis.
7. **Monitoring Arrangements**
- 7.1 Education review and monitor both the planning of school places and management of school estate processes and outcomes consistently throughout each academic year, incorporating learning from the previous year.

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

Appendix 1a and 1b – Surplus Place % Table and Graph	Appendix 2 – Live Birth Data and Graph
Appendix 3 – All Wales Graph	Appendix 4 – Division of responsibilities Guidance
Appendix 5 – Education Summer Works Overview	
Appendix 6 – Condition and Suitability Assessment Overview	Appendix 7 – January 2020 Projections