

Committee: **People Scrutiny Committee**
 Date of meeting: **6th September 2022**
 Report Subject: **Summary Self–Evaluation Report 2022**
 Portfolio Holder: **Cllr. Sue Edmunds, Executive Member for People and Education**
 Report Submitted by: **Lynn Phillips, Corporate Director of Education**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
✓	11.08.22	25.08.22			06.09.22	14.09.22		

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Members of the People Scrutiny Committee with an opportunity to scrutinise the findings of ongoing self-evaluation processes undertaken within the Education Directorate, across the Council and with key partners, particularly for the Summary Self-Evaluation Report (SER).

2. Scope and Background

2.1 Blaenau Gwent Education Services are committed to self-review and self-improvement and view these processes as being fundamental to securing ongoing improvement in educational outcomes and effectiveness of provision. The Education Directorate has adopted a standardised approach for self-evaluation (SE) that is now embedded into the day to day practice. This report looks at the emerging findings against the inspection framework for Local Government Education Services (LGES), which will inform assessment of progress against the key improvement priorities set out in business improvement plans. The revised Education Improvement Plan (EIP) priorities for 2022-25 are shown in **(Appendix 1)**.

2.2 The report provides the Education Directorate’s Self-Evaluation Policy **(Appendix 2)**, which sets out the arrangements for effective self-evaluation. The findings from the Summary Self-Evaluation Report (SER) are reflected as actions for improvement in the Directorate’s Business Plans at Directorate, Service and Team levels. Effective self-evaluation means that the Directorate remains focussed on improving the right areas of work. The LA has established a Headteacher Working Group (HWG) to support self-evaluation activity and 7 Headteachers are engaged. The feedback from the Headteachers is that the Summary SER is a ‘fair and balanced’ picture of overall performance across the LGES framework.

2.3 A comprehensive data set of school performance, coupled with evaluations of impact and effectiveness of Council based and partnership support feeds into the overall evaluation. It should be noted, however, that there has been a relaxation of reporting performance arrangements by Welsh Government.

Therefore, the Education Directorate is unable to report on school benchmarking/performance data and school categorisation has been suspended, therefore, any information presented in this report is to only be used for internal self-evaluation purposes. The report focusses on the Summary SER updates, particularly the way that corporately the Council, Education Directorate and partners are supporting our schools/learners across the school estate. Self-evaluation is an on-going process and the SER has been updated to reflect the KS4 and Post 16 results realised during the Summer Series 2021 through Centre Determined Grades (CDGs) the SER will also be amended to reflect KS4 & KS5 results from the summer series 2022.

- 2.4 A comprehensive self-evaluation process helps identify those areas where progress has been made and where further improvement is required. Emerging findings, via ongoing self-evaluation are captured every Autumn and Springtime as well as via corporate performance and finance reporting mechanisms. This report details the findings and these are shown in the Summary SER attached as (Appendix 3). The SER is structured in a way to be aligned to the Estyn Local Government Education Services (LGES) framework as detailed below.
- 2.5 The three inspection areas of the LGES inspection framework are:
- Inspection Area 1 – Outcomes**
 - Standards and progress overall
 - Standards and progress of specific groups
 - Wellbeing and attitudes to learning
 - Inspection Area 2 – Education Services and Provision**
 - Support for school improvement
 - Support for vulnerable learners
 - Other education support services
 - Inspection Area 3 – Leadership and Management**
 - Quality and effectiveness of leaders and managers
 - Self-evaluation and improvement planning
 - Professional learning
 - Safeguarding arrangements
 - Use of resources
- 2.6 It is the high-level points only, which are presented in the main body of this report shown under Section 6, which is provided to contribute to Members potential areas for discussion. Schools continue to respond well to the new ways of working e.g., Curriculum for Wales Reform, ALN Reform and post COVID response.
3. **Options for Recommendation**
- 3.1 This report has been discussed by Education DMT and CLT prior to submission to the People Scrutiny Committee.
- 3.2 **Option 1:** to accept the report as presented, whilst also acknowledging that effective self-evaluation is an on-going process.

- 3.3 **Option 2:** to scrutinise the information detailed within the report and contribute to the continuous assessment of effectiveness by making appropriate suggestions and/or recommendations to the Executive Committee.

This report provides the Committee with important monitoring information, as well as opportunity to identify where progress has been made and where further improvement is required.

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

4.1 **Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

One of the objectives in the Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan aims for every child to have the best start in life. Through effective self-evaluation and improvement planning processes, the Education Directorate seeks to ensure that provision is appropriate and able to meet the needs of children and young people, so that their progress and performance improves.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

5.1.1 The Council allocates approximately £50.4 million (2022/23) to schools via the Individual Schools Budget (ISB) to provide high quality education and to improve pupil outcomes. The Council's total gross budgeted expenditure per pupil for 202/23 is £7,397 which is the highest in Wales and £624 above the Welsh average of £6,773.

5.1.2 For 2022/23 the funding delegated to schools was 85.2% which is above the all Wales average and ranked 1st when compared to the family of LAs. (Local Authority Budgeted Expenditure on Schools 2022/23) (**Appendix 4**).

5.1.3 The Council commissions the Education Achievement Service (EAS) to deliver the statutory functions of school improvement. The annual financial costs being circa £350,000 and a 0.4% decrease on the previous financial year. Schools categorisation profile has improved (although currently suspended) against a backdrop of decreasing financial contributions to the EAS: this therefore, effectively represents good value for money. The Education Directorate holds the EAS to account for the impact and effectiveness of their work in schools in Blaenau Gwent.

5.2 **Risk including Mitigating Actions**

5.2.1 Risk can be associated with weak self-evaluation that fails to accurately identify those areas where good progress has been made and where further improvement is needed. Strong self-evaluation helps services target resources at greatest need and hence bring about improvement precisely where it is required.

5.2.2 Risk mitigating actions include:

- strong self-evaluation processes, which accurately identify those areas which need to improve the most;
- the routine monitoring of quantitative and qualitative information, regular quality assurance meetings between the Council and the EAS, as well as assurance meetings within the Education Directorate and across teams, school inspection findings; and,
- the progress schools make is also monitored on a termly basis. School safeguarding processes are also closely monitored.

5.2.3 Holistic support packages are devised via regular cross-service meetings between OD, Finance, Health and Safety, Education and School Governor Support Services.

5.3 **Legal**

This report provides information about end of Key Stage school performance underpinned by processes set out in the School Standards and Organisation Act Wales (2013) in supporting both strategic and operational activity to improve pupil outcomes and wellbeing.

5.4 **Human Resources**

There are no direct HR/OD implications associated with this report, however, it is intended to establish a corporate/partnership project group for project management purposes to create collective ownership as well as distributed leadership for self-evaluation across the board. The group will also play a key role in being Estyn inspection ready.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

(NB. Some school performance information relates to 2019-20, however, the performance data pack (**Appendix 5**) provides evidence for self-evaluation purposes only from 2021).

6.1.1 **Areas where good progress has been made:**

- The Education Directorate received Full Council approval (2020-2021) to establish a new leadership and management structure that includes additional capacity for school improvement;
- There have been strong appointments made to the Education Directorate's leadership team, including a Head of School Improvement and Inclusion and Service Managers for Education Transformation and Business Change, Young People and Partnerships as well as the Service Manager Inclusion on a secondment basis;
- The Corporate and Education Directorate's response to COVID-19 has been effective and this is discussed in the Estyn Thematic Review and this has been followed up in the Summer Letter (2021) commentary;
- School inspection and school categorisation profile has improved significantly with no primary schools in follow up and notable practice identified in a number of schools;

- There has been an incremental reduction in Schools Causing Concern from 6 schools in 2019 to only 2 schools in 2022. ALC has been removed from Estyn Significant Improvement category;
- GCSE L2 English, Maths and Capped 9 improved overall, albeit the results in 2020-21 were realised through Centre Assessment Grades (CAGs) and not through external examinations;
- The 2021 Centre Determined Grades were positive and in line with the SDP targets set by the 4 secondary settings. There were improvements in approaching two thirds of the key measures. The results are shown in the Performance Data Pack as well as the Main SER for self-evaluation purposes;
- GCSE A*/A and A*-C grades improved in English and Maths;
- Planning arrangements for Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Reform are well developed and a Phase 1 summary evaluation implementation document evidences the progress made across the school estate;
- The partnership with Schools, Coleg Gwent and Post 16 providers has strengthened through the establishment of the Post 16 Strategic Partnership Board. A-level A*-C and A*-E grades continue to be strong and were in line with the all-Wales means at 99.1%;
- Value-added progress in English and Maths, reading and numeracy for our 7 and 11 year olds improved in 2019-20. BG's schools are working towards the use of GL assessments across the board in 2022 to assess learner progress. This data will only be used to inform self-evaluation and not for accountability purposes;
- The Youth Service exceeded that of the all-Wales means for reach and accredited learning outcomes. The levels of NEETs at 1.5% are at their lowest levels i.e., 9 young people;
- Primary persistent absenteeism reduced to below that of the all-Wales means;
- The School Based Counselling Service provides good support and this is evidenced through the evaluation reports;
- Permanent exclusions reduced;
- Strong progress through the 21st Century Schools programme with robust programme management arrangements in place. The Band B programme is well underway an investment of circa £26m into the school estate;
- Good progress against the Welsh Education Strategic Plan (WESP), including WG approval of the BG 10 Year WESP and the new Welsh medium seedling school moving to project implementation stage;
- Headteacher induction and support programme very well received by aspiring and new Headteachers;
- Schools are strategically contributing to a full systems approach e.g., self-evaluation work as well as collaborative leadership arrangements and this will continue moving forward through the on-going work of the Headteacher Working Groups (covering Self-Evaluation/Curriculum/ALN Reforms).

- Effective ICT support provided particularly to digitally disadvantaged learners in order for them to engage in digital platforms including the coordination and distribution of technology. ICT Strategy nearing completion;
- The Education components of the corporate staff wellbeing survey results were good;
- Overall, the revenue financial position of the Education Directorate and schools has improved significantly with school balances at £4.3m in 2021-22; including redressing the budget deficit in one school that i.e., Abertillery Learning Community. The ALC Corporate Group monitors performance and financial sustainability of the setting. The LA has passed an 8.4% uplift to schools via the ISB in 2022-23; and,
- The Council and EAS are evidencing improving value for money returns i.e., improvement in standards overall with less resources.

6.1.2 **Areas where further improvement is required:**

- Implement the Education Recovery and Renewal Plan. Higher levels of language acquisition and reading across the board, but particularly in our very young children in early years. This will be a real focus of the recovery programme from COVID as we 'build back better' in line with Curriculum for Wales Reform;
- Improve attainment of eFSM pupils and particularly our more-able pupils throughout education;
- Improve school attendance in both primary and secondary sectors;
- Improve progress between Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, particularly in English, Maths and Science;
- Reviewing the Inclusion service and implementing the plans/provision for pupils with additional learning needs e.g., increasing Pen-y-Cwm Special School capacity and providing whole school strategic support for provision in line with the requirements of the ALN Reform Act. This includes a review of the Resource Bases across the schools;
- Reviewing the Inclusion Strategy and associated policies, particularly monitoring of relevant data, such as Behaviour Management and RPIs etc.
- Continuing the work with Schools Causing Concern (SCC), particularly the school currently in an Estyn category. BFS 'One Plan' monitoring;
- The River Centre is a School Causing Concern and is subject to Statutory Warning Notice (SWN) letter for improvement. This setting is likely to require further support following a recent inspection;
- Reduce school exclusions and support parents/carers who opt to Elective Home Educate (EHE), with increases linked to COVID;
- Staff and pupil wellbeing has been significantly impacted by the pandemic: issues relating to emotional health and wellbeing are on the rise, which will need to be fully supported by the Education Directorate, schools and wider community moving forward;

- Securing funding post Brexit for European Social Fund (ESF) programmes e.g., Inspire; and,
- Pupil progress monitoring at a LA and school level for self-evaluation purposes is an area for development, therefore, the commissioning of GL assessment in conjunction with all schools is planned from September 2022.

6.1.3 The Education Directorate has established a corporate self-evaluation forum to work with services across the Council, for example, Children’s Services, Regeneration, Legal, Finance and Organisational Development to focus the work on improving pupil outcomes and supporting school leaders. The Council will also continue to develop a modernised relationship with the Education Achievement Service (EAS) to support our school leaders to improve pupil outcomes and wellbeing.

6.2 **Expected outcome for the public**

The expected outcome for the public is that the Education Directorate’s self-evaluation activity contributes to improving educational standards and wellbeing of children and young people across the County Borough.

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

The Directorate’s self-evaluation processes are aligned with LGES and the regional policy for monitoring, supporting, evaluation and intervention in schools. The school categorisation process has been suspended by WG in academic year 2020-21.

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

Analysis of individual school performance data is a key element in ensuring that schools are known well by the Council so that appropriate support and intervention can be directed towards areas of greatest need. The Welsh Government will determine when schools will be required to resume reporting on performance data.

6.5 **Preventative focus**

Through effective self-evaluation processes, support and monitoring of school performance, early identification of emerging areas for improvement can be identified with consequent early intervention to secure improvement. The effectiveness of the Council’s monitoring, support, evaluation, and intervention programmes ensure that preventative action is taken early in order to minimise the escalation of concerns.

6.6 **Collaboration / partnership working**

The Council collaborates with key strategic partners and neighbouring local authorities through the South East Wales Consortium for the provision of school improvement services from the Education Achievement Service (EAS) as well as a range of pupil support services for specific groups such as visually and hearing impaired learners.

6.7 **Integration (across service areas)**

Effective monitoring, support, evaluation and intervention are fundamental to meeting the Council's wellbeing objectives.

6.8 **Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions**

The Council is committed to ensuring that all new schools and college buildings, major refurbishment and extension projects meet Net Zero Carbon targets from January 1st 2022. Although the application of Net Zero Carbon is not required retrospectively, Welsh Government has confirmed that they will look to commit 100% funding where the application to existing schemes under development is possible.

6.9 **Integrated Impact Assessment**

This report does not require an integrated impact assessment to be completed.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 Monitoring of the emerging findings of self-evaluation is an important mechanism for ensuring that Members of the People Scrutiny Committee and the Executive Committee are sufficiently informed to enable them to make informed decisions regarding the quality of education provision and hence pupil outcomes and wellbeing. There are well-established processes in place to ensure that business plans are considerate of emerging findings for improvement.

Background Documents / Electronic Links

- Appendix 1a and 1b – EIP Business Plan Priorities
- Appendix 2 – Self-Evaluation Policy
- Appendix 3 - Summary SER
- Appendix 4 – Local Authority Budgeted Expenditure on Schools
- Appendix 5 - Performance and Data Pack