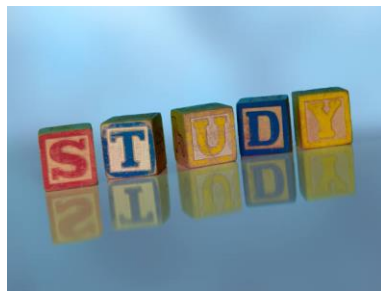




Education Directorate Self-Evaluation Summary Report Date: Summer 2022



Contents:

Context		
Blaenau Gwent School and Local Authority - Context		2
Executive Summary		
		3
Inspection Area 1 – Outcomes		
1.1 Standards and Progress Overall	Areas where good progress has been made and how we know	6
	Areas for improvement and how we are going to do it	7
1.2 Standards and Progress of Specific Groups	Areas where good progress has been made and how we know	9
	Areas for improvement and how we are going to do it	10
1.3 Well-being and Attitudes to Learning	Areas where good progress has been made and how we know	12
	Areas for improvement and how we are going to do it	13
Inspection Area 2 – Education Services		
2.1 Support for school improvement	Areas where good progress has been made and how we know	14
	Areas for improvement and how we are going to do it	15
2.2 Support for Vulnerable Learners	Areas where good progress has been made and how we know	15
	Areas for improvement and how we are going to do it	17
2.3 Support for Other Services	Areas where good progress has been made and how we know	19
	Areas for improvement and how we are going to do it	21
Inspection Area 3 – Leadership and Management		
3.1 Quality and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Areas where good progress has been made and how we know	21
	Areas for improvement and how we are going to do it	22
3.2 Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Areas where good progress has been made and how we know	22
	Areas for improvement and how we are going to do it	23
3.3 Professional learning	Areas where good progress has been made and how we know	23
	Areas for improvement and how we are going to do it	24
3.4 Safeguarding	Areas where good progress has been made and how we know	24
	Areas for improvement and how we are going to do it	24
3.5 Use of Resources	Areas where good progress has been made and how we know	25
	Areas for improvement and how we are going to do it	26

Blaenau Gwent - Context

Blaenau Gwent has 25 schools and their status is detailed below:

- 2 are Maintained 3-16 Learning Communities,
- 1 Foundation Comprehensive,
- 1 Maintained Comprehensive,
- 1 x Maintained 3-18 Special School,
- 1 x Maintained 3-16 SEBD Special School; and,
- 19 Primaries (of which 4 are voluntary aided / faith schools)

There are currently circa 9,000+ pupils on roll across all Blaenau Gwent schools.

The organisation, End Child Poverty, released new data in October 2020 with findings showing that the highest rates of child poverty in Wales are in Pembrokeshire and Blaenau Gwent. Blaenau Gwent is one of the counties in Wales to have seen a rise in the proportion of children living in poverty. The impact of poverty on children is well documented, with children from low-income families more likely to experience worse physical and mental health; do less well in school; and have fewer opportunities in the future. The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) captures the extent of deprivation as a proportion of residents living in each lower super output area (LSOA). The eight considerations of the WIMD are: income; employment; health; education, skills and training; geographical access to services; housing; physical environment; and community safety. Blaenau Gwent has the highest percentage of it LSOAs areas in the most deprived areas across Wales at 10%, for income (19.1%), education (27.7%), and community safety (23.4%).

The proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals in Blaenau Gwent is over 30% during 2021-22 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. 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. However, within Blaenau Gwent we have high ambitions for all of our learners and our socio-economic standing is a challenge that we are working to overcome to the benefit of all of our children and young people.

Overall, the 2019 WIMD figures and high eFSM eligibility reflect very high levels of deprivation within the authority. More recently, the COVID pandemic has also seen an increase in the levels of eFSM to circa 30%+, which is monitored closely. They also indicate the significant consideration required to improve educational outcomes to levels within other similar LAs and to consistently match the all-Wales averages. 2018-19 performance figures show that Blaenau Gwent has achieved parity, and indeed, out-performed some LAs in a number of measures confirming the progress being made within its schools. The 2020-21 KS4 and Post 16 KS5 provisional results have been included in the Summary SER via the performance data pack during the Autumn term to inform the on-going self-evaluation process, however, there is recognition the outcomes were awarded via the Centre Assessment Grades (CAGs) and/or the awarding examination body's assessed grade.

Executive Summary:

This Executive Summary is a high-level analysis of key strategic areas of progress, and importantly, aspects of work identified for improvement across the Estyn Local Government Education Services (LGES) framework. There are clearly more details in the Main Self-Evaluation Report (SER), however, the Executive Summary provides a high-level synopsis to enable the Education Directorate, the Council and key partners to understand and focus on critical strands of work to continue to improve outcomes for children and young people across the County Borough.

The Summary SER has been developed using a collaborative approach across a number of service areas such as Social Services and Flying Start and also with a Headteacher Working Group (HWG). The Local Authority Self-Evaluation Headteacher Working Group has been established with seven Heads identified to support the development and review of the overall SER. A primary consideration is to corroborate self-evaluation findings from a BG schools' perspective. The feedback from the HWG during the Summer term 2022 is that the Summary SER is a fair and balanced view of overall performance.

The information detailed in this document regularly features in the self-evaluation reports presented to Scrutiny and Executive Committees. The Council will continue to work with partners 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 work with partners, such as the Education Achievement Service (EAS) to support our school leaders to improve pupil outcomes and wellbeing. There are changes that will be introduced to the reporting and accountability framework for academic year 2020 and onwards linked to the COVID-19 emergency response, particularly a relaxation in the requirements for School and Council performance reporting arrangements. Clearly, the Education Directorate will need to remain focussed on self-evaluation procedures, as outlined in the review of the SE Policy 2020, particularly an analysis of the provisional KS4 and Post 16 results during the autumn term 2022, where external examination processes are going to be re-introduced.

Blaenau Gwent's Education Services are committed to self-review and self-improvement and view these processes as being fundamental to securing ongoing improvement in outcomes, quality and effectiveness. The Education Directorate has adopted a standardised approach for self-evaluation (SE) that is now embedded into the day-to-day practice. This has been reviewed to align with Estyn's inspection framework for Local Government Education Services (LGES). This Summary SER looks at the emerging findings against the inspection framework for Local Government Education Services (LGES), which will inform evaluations of progress against the key improvement priorities set out in business and improvement plans.

Key Strategic Areas of Progress

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/Partnerships as well as the Service Manager Inclusion.
- 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 excellent 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 overall 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 SE 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 implementation stage;
- Headteacher induction and support programme very well received by aspiring and new Headteachers;
- Schools are strategically contributing in 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 SE/CfW/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.

Key Strategic Areas for Improvement

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 now a School Causing Concern and is subject to Statutory Warning Notice (SWN) letter for improvement. This setting is likely to go into an Estyn category following a recent inspection;
- Reduce school exclusions and support parents/carers who opt to Elective Home Educate (EHE), increases linked to COVID; and,
- 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 ESF programmes e.g. Inspire.
- 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.

1.1 Standards and Progress Overall - Areas where good progress has been made and how we know

Foundation Phase

- 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;
 - Language was a little higher than expected in 2019; and
 - Progress in reading was seen in about two-thirds of mainstream schools (about half in 2019) and numeracy reasoning was better than expected in most schools.
- The 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

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

Key Stage 4

- 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.
- Higher than expected ranking in relation to eFSM except for numeracy and science. This was particularly so for the Skills Challenge Certificate result which ranked 7th out of the 22 Welsh LAs.
- The proportion of learners attaining A*-C grades in Welsh 1st 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 1st language.
- Abertillery LC 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 English & capped 9 points scores.
- The 2021 Centre Determined Grades were positive overall and in line with the SDP targets set by the 4 secondary settings. The results are shown in the Main SER and data pack for self-evaluation purposes.

Post-16

- At A level and AS level, the proportions of learners attaining A*-C and A*-E grades were in line with the all-Wales means in 2020-21.
- For vocational courses, attainment rates in 2020 were similar to or higher than in the previous year except for L3.
- Entry level learners were 100% successful.

Youth Service

- 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%).
- 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), the best performance across the SEWC region.
- In addition, the Youth Service recorded 7,298 anonymous contacts during 2018-19 through the 11-18 Counselling Service, C Card, detached youth work, outreach and out of school activities and events, 1,000 more than previous year.
- Current data indicates 1.5% of learners being NEET (9 learners). The all Wales figure has not yet been published.

1.1 Standards and Progress Overall - Areas for improvement and how we are going to do it

Areas identified for Improvement and Action Required

Foundation Phase

- BG and national averages at LO4+ and LO5+ fell for all performance indicators during the last 2 years with the fall being greater for BG in 2019, increasing the performance gap.

- 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 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

- Welsh and Welsh 2nd 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) 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 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 in 2019, particularly for maths, science, art, history and geography. All results were lower than the 2019 national means and particularly so for MFL and history. These falls reflect those observed within Wales as a whole. There is a consideration 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 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. A large number of these pupils were from one setting.
- Some schools had inconsistencies between NC and national test progress scores. This questions the accuracy and reliability of assessment procedures within these settings.

Key Stage 4

- Results for the new National Measures and in relation to the LA's eFSM entitlement were all lower than the national means.
- The proportion of learners gaining L2+ and 5 A*/A grades in 2019 was below the LA targets and fell by about 2%, well below the national mean.
- 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 in nearly all schools during 2017-19 compared with previous years; and
- for maths was much weaker than for English in all mainstream schools.
- Too many pupils failed to progress (or even regressed) in English and particularly in maths in KS4 during 2017-19. 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 2nd 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.
- The River Centre Learning Community was issued with a Statutory Warning Notice in 2021. The Local Authority exercised its right to appoint an LA Chair of Governors November 2021. Early stage progress against the SWN is being made, however, secondary provision is of concern.
- Brynmawr Foundation School received an Estyn monitoring visit in the Autumn/Spring/Summer terms, it was identified that progress is being made in leadership and behaviour management, but there needs to be further progress with teaching, learning and standards.

Post 16

- The proportion of learners attaining higher level grades (A*/A) at both A and AS level has again increased in 2021, although is still below the Wales performance level so is an area for further improvement.
- There has been a small dip in vocational success rates in 2018-2020 and there is room for improvement at L2 courses, which is currently at 80% completion rate. Success rates across the board, however, remain relatively strong.
- Embed process initiated in 2019-20, where Coleg Gwent provides monthly updates on retention rates and specific learner withdrawals.

Risk Considerations

- The risk of failure to continue to make progress on raising educational standards, particularly in the school that remains in an Estyn category (BFS), which features in the Corporate Risk Register (CRR) and risk mitigation is monitored by Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) and Elected Members via Scrutiny and the Executive Committees.

1.2 Standards and Progress of Specific Groups - Areas where good progress has been made and how we know

Foundation Phase

- 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. 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 were higher than for the whole Y6 cohort in 2019 and national test scores in both reading and numeracy reasoning were also higher.
- 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 cohort in both subject areas.

Key Stage 3

- L6+ gender differences were lower than the all-Wales means in each core subject, lower than the previous year for most non-core subjects and lower than the national means for about one-half of non-core subjects. L6+ English results also improved in 2019 with a consequent narrowing of the performance gap compared with national outcomes.
- On average, boys made greater progress in numeracy reasoning than girls during KS3 and so reversed the gender gap.
- eFSM and non-eFSM – 2019:
 - differences were lower than the national averages at both L5+ and L6+;
 - eFSM pupils made greater progress at reading and numeracy, narrowing the performance gap; and
 - Mean progress scores in reading and numeracy reasoning were better than expected.
- Statemented pupils made, on average, very good progress in reading & numeracy reasoning throughout 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 cohort.

Key Stage 4

- 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 maths was relatively high, much improved compared to previous years and generally similar to those for non-SEN pupils.
- Ethnic minority pupils had similar outcomes and average progress rates to non-EM pupils in English language.
- In English language / literature and in maths / numeracy compared to the whole Y11 cohort:
 - Young offenders generally had higher outcomes;
 - LAC had similar outcomes; and
 - Low attenders had similar or higher outcomes.

1.2 Standards and Progress of Specific Groups - Areas for improvement and how we are going to do it

Areas identified for improvement and Required Action

Foundation Phase:

- Boys' outcomes continue to be below those of girls in each main performance indicator. However, girls' higher level (LO6+) results have fallen 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 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 and particularly science fell during the last 3 years and decreased in line with 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 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 adequate while those for maths / numeracy were unsatisfactory. The 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.
- Ethnic Minority 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.

Risk Considerations

- The risk of failure to continue to make progress on raising educational standards in the school remaining in an Estyn category(BFS) features in the Corporate Risk Register (CRR) and risk mitigation is monitored by Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) and Elected Members via Scrutiny and the Executive Committees.

1.3 Well-being and Attitudes to Learning - Areas where good progress has been made and how we know

- 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 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 sport and physical activity programmes e.g. 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. An effective 11-18 counselling service is in place with very positive feedback from attendees, with an extended service for 18-25 year olds.

- BG is one of only a few Councils to have a fully compliant 3rd School Sport Survey to inform more targeted work. BG is participating in the Sport Wales School Sport Survey in 2022.
- Three out of four BG secondary schools exceeded the WG modelled figures for attendance in 2019.
- Relatively low rate of fixed-term exclusions compared with other LAs in Wales.
- Improving procedures for tracking Children Missing Education (CME).
- An improving picture of increased opportunities for *pupil voice* in BG schools and greater learner participation in decision-making. This is supported corporately across the LA through the Equalities team e.g. Grand School Council and Youth Forum.
- Accredited outcomes for registered young people with the Youth Services are strong and above the Welsh mean.
- Whole School Approach (WSA) to Emotional and Mental Wellbeing
 - A regional partnership group has been established whose main aim is to identify and share professional learning and support available to schools. This group includes representation from healthy schools, educational psychology, EAS and Schools in Reach. To support schools in meeting the well-being needs of both pupils and staff, several initiatives have been implemented by the LA including the following:
 - Self-assessment tool –the extension of the pilot and use of the tool, with **** schools having now completed the self-assessment exercise.

Additionally, the following well-being initiatives have been a focus, with the aim of meeting the needs of our most vulnerable learners, including:

- Emotionally Based School Avoidance;
- Circle of Security; and,
- ELSA and Trauma Informed Schools (TIS).
- ‘Guidance for schools on peer sexual abuse, exploitation and harmful sexual behaviour’ has been developed by VAWSDASV – this was shared with all schools in January 2021.

1.3 Well-being and Attitudes to Learning - Areas for improvement and how we are going to do it

Attendance, Exclusions and Persistent Absenteeism:

Primary:

- To improve primary school attendance in BG from its current rate of 89.5% to 93.3%.
- To reduce primary unauthorised absence in BG from its current rate of 2.3% to 1.4% which was the pre-COVID all-Wales means.

- To work to reduce PA in the primary sector to below that of its 20/21 rate of 10.5%.

Secondary:

- To improve secondary school attendance from its current rate of 85.3% to 91.6%.
- To reduce unauthorised absence in the secondary sector in BG from its current rate of 4.4 % 1.7%, which was the pre-COVID all-Wales means.
- To reduce PA in the secondary sector in BG to well below its 20/21 rate of 25.8% to 5.0%
- 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.
- EWS to work with EPS to develop Emotionally Based School Avoidance processes in all schools and work with the established Gwent Whole Schools Approach (GWSA) to Wellbeing to develop their 'Spirals of Enquiry' work across the local authority as part of their work across the region. They will recruit 27 schools from across Gwent to run in 3 cohorts, each cohort consisting of 9 Spirals Teams ('Triads') and a link GWSA Team Psychologist. Each spirals team will consist of 3 members that will join the cohort meeting with GWSA Team Psychologists every half term. The purpose of these meetings will be for cohorts to check in and work on their spirals, as well as developing opportunities for learning to implement the WSA Framework.

Risk Considerations

- The risk is that disrupted learning and school attendance has an impact on pupil progression and learning, particularly in light of the COVID-19 emergency.

2.1 Support for school improvement - Areas where good progress has been made and how we know

- The LA has appointed both a Head of School Improvement and Inclusion post and Service Manager-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 co-ordination of support to schools via good partnership working between the LA and EAS e.g. monthly partnership arrangements.
- Improved School Categorisation and School Inspection profile over the last 3 years, including only 2 schools now considered as SCC/TAS.
- Good outcomes / progress for identified vulnerable groups in recent years.
- The Council has appropriately used of statutory powers which are kept under review e.g. the River Centre.
- The process for the appointment of LA Governors is now well established and there is evidence of improved governance in a majority of schools. The levels of Governor vacancies are at their lowest levels circa less than 10 in Spring term 2022.

- Sofrydd has been removed from the SCC process December 2021.
- Brynmawr Foundation School received a monitoring visit from Estyn in the Autumn/Spring/Summer Terms, progress was identified with leadership and with pupil behaviour.
- Abertillery Learning Community had the Statutory Warning Notice removed in the Spring Term 2022.

2.1 Support for school improvement - Areas for improvement and how we are going to do it

- Partnership work between BG Inclusion Services and EAS School Improvement Partners 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 and monitoring 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 progress procedures within schools, using the GL assessment tools with a particular focus on formative (assessment for learning).
- Increasing opportunities for schools to share good practice e.g. Joint Headteachers' and HWG 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.

Risk Considerations

- 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 Support for Vulnerable Learners - Areas where good progress has been made and how we know

Progress has been made through the comprehensive ALN provision, however the Inclusion review is on-going:

- A report to consider Pen-y-Cwm capacity was approved by the Executive Committee in the Spring 2021 and is being implemented to increase capacity to 175 places. This included short-term developments to the building to accommodate additional learners, which was completed in the Summer term.;
- Readiness for the implementation of the ALN reform to support learners is secure and evidenced in the Phase 1 implementation summary report;

- Reviews of school resource bases is underway;
- The Inclusion Service will be reviewed and is being reconfigured to meet the diversity of present need e.g. the Observation Classroom which is being researched – that will support early identification of need and support schools to support learners in mainstream education, therefore, avoidance of requiring specialist provision. This would facilitate a potential reduction to the Inclusion budget i.e. both specialist school placement and associated transport costs;
- Exclusions: Monitoring of pupil level exclusion data by DMT and Inclusion teams has improved, 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;
- ALN in Early Years: ALN Panel arrangements are effective in providing support for EY pupils with ALN. ALN capacity-building in EY is now provided through the permanently appointed EYALN Lead Officer.
- Resource Base provision has improved, particularly for pupils who experience Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD) Furthermore, a review of all bases is planned for September 2022 in association with the schools;
- Sound practice has been secured in Pen-y-Cwm Special School;
- Estyn judgements in school inspections for care support and guidance largely remain good or better.
- Whole School Approach (WSA) to Emotional and Mental Wellbeing; The Local Authority has effectively utilised funding from the Welsh Government to ensure that schools have been supported to introduce and embed a Whole School Approach (WSA) to Well-Being. There has been an increased focus on addressing the well-being needs of both learners and pupils, with a joint approach delivered by, amongst others, the Educational Psychology Service, Counselling Service and the Healthy Schools Coordinator. A further funding proposal to extend the LA's WSA to Wellbeing has been approved by WG and in 2022/23, the following will be an on-going priority for the LA:
 - Counselling; BG appropriately uses a mixture of data collection in terms of aggregate data, emotional wellbeing assessments and evaluation forms. Consultations and feedback is regularly sought with Counsellors and schools with information also gathered from other stakeholders and via Single Point of Access for Children's Emotional Wellbeing Panel. (SPACE Panel);
 - Trauma Informed Schools (TIS); There has been an increased number of both school-based and relevant LA-based staff who have undertaken Diploma level training in Trauma Informed Schools (TIS), utilising the Attendance Support and Community Schools element of the Local Authority Education Grant. A further cohort of thirteen will pursue the Diploma in Autumn term 2022. The aim is that all schools in the LA will, eventually, have at least one TIS qualified practitioner, who can support CYP with trauma-related/ACEs needs.
 - EPS Training; The EPS provide a range of Well-being related training opportunities including interventions such as Circle of Security (COSC), Emotion Coaching, Roots of Empathy and ELSA.
 - ELSA-Specifically regarding the ELSA programme, 92% of schools now have at least one ELSA. 100% of the ALNCos in these schools state that, where their ELSAs are operating, the programme is making a positive difference to practice and pupil outcomes. 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, with evaluations of their training completed by a new cohort of TAs were very favourable, demonstrating how the EPS has maintained high quality delivery of bespoke training to settings. 100% of ALNCos in schools that had taken advantage of the training offer and were able to confirm that they can evidence improved provision for learners with ALN, based on the training received.

- 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;
 - in the progress rates between KS3 and KS4 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 for improvement and how we are going to do it

- The quality and effectiveness of support to increase attainment of young pupils in the early years and at the end of the Foundation Phase (including eFSM pupils) needs to be reviewed, and this will be a key piece of work for the EY ALNLO to support schools with. The EYALNLO has established the statutory paperwork to ensure pre-school settings are aware of the impact of the ALN Reform and implementation. The permanent appointment was made in the Summer term 2022, ready to enter Phase 2 of implementation, with a focus on practical strategies to ensure the needs of learners in the EYs and FP are met.
- As part of Phase 2 of ALN Implementation, the LA has continued to support and monitor how well-prepared the school workforce is, to meet the statutory requirements of ALN reform. The LA's ALN Implementation Leads and Inclusive Practice Service have continued to work closely with EPS to review and monitor the quality of schools' Additional Learning Provision, to ensure quality-first teaching and inclusive practice and effective leadership and management of inclusion and ALN.
 - A report completed by the LA's outgoing ALN Implementation Lead (July 2022), highlights the pleasing progress that has been made by schools in meeting the statutory requirements of ALN Reform. The work of YGTCS has been very much led by each individual school's own requirements, and any support identified has reflected fully these bespoke needs as part of a co-constructed provision package working within Priority 2 of the Regional Implementation plan.
- As part of its work, YGTCS has undertaken evaluative discussions during the summer term with individual schools, to determine progress during the first year of the 'roll-over', the challenges faced and plans moving forward into 22-23. All schools once again engaged fully in open, honest and non-judgemental discussions with regards to their current position for ALN transformation. These professional dialogue sessions were held with the school's respective Headteacher (and/or SLT Lead where applicable) and ALNCO, together with YGTCS's Headteacher and ALNCO.

Moving forward, the key action points identified are as follows:

- Address the highly variable time allocation for ALNCOs to fulfil their now statutory roles.
- Address the significant concerns with those learners in the early years setting through the work of the EYALNLO and schools.

- There is still some school level clarity required with regards to the IDPs for learners placed with LA maintained resource bases. Clarity is needed as to who is accountable for owning and maintaining the IDP in this case. Further clarity is also required with regards to the legislation with regards to IDPs and how the LA will support schools with this to avoid any resulting tribunal scenarios.
- Designate roles for an ALN Reform Lead and ALN Reform Champions to lead cluster work, support schools, monitor ALPs and quality assure school-based IDPs.

Revolving Door Approach: there needs to be effective support, particularly in the River Centre to support pupils presenting with difficult behaviour and those reluctant to attend school. Further systems approaches 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 are early signs of progress being made against the SWN letter in place for the school and a service agreement is under development between the River Centre and the Council to formalise the arrangements. The appointments of an interim Executive Headteacher and LA-appointment Chair of Governors/Governors will ensure improvements at the River Centre are delivered.

- 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. The LA and Headteachers' Working Party are currently exploring how to best track and measure the impact of interventions, especially as the LA starts to roll out the 'Literacy Junction' intervention programme. GL Assessment are to be commissioned to consider a range of packages to establish baselines and the Headteacher Working Party will develop consistency across the LA.
- EHE practice for those on the cusp of EHE to be more targeted. The Action Plan needs to be fully implemented. Since November 2021, further support is in place with the appointment of an EWO supporting EHE learners.
- 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. 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: are securing 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 ALNCo roles 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 and further attention to schools supporting the work of their ELSAs.
- EPS supporting ALNCos to build capacity for ALN. The EPS has maintained performance in providing high quality support and challenge to schools, with all but one setting confirming that this had improved their capacity to provide for vulnerable learners. The same number of

ALNCOs reported that the strategies and interventions provided by the EPS had led to improvements in provision, and subsequent outcomes, for vulnerable learners. 93% of the ALNCOs confirmed that the EPS had helped them to develop their skills and knowledge and, consequently, manage their roles more effectively. The termly ALNCO Forum, together with the Resource Base Leads' Professional Network meetings provide a platform for ALNCOs to share best practice and for information-sharing.

- EPS whole school training; there has been significant support for schools, with a particular focus on well-being, as described in earlier section.
- Pregnant School Girls and Young Mums: To ensure the LA we are made aware of these pupils in a timely basis, so that exclusions, attendance, support and any alternative provisions are monitored and reviewed on a monthly basis and in compliance with the new policy.
- Implement the Pen-y-Cwm capacity plans to meet the increasing demand for places.

Risk Considerations

- The strategic risks relate to implementation of ALN Reform and improving the quality of provision at the River Centre. There is confirmation that there will be WG ALN funding in place for the next three years, to ensure LAs are in a position to support their schools in implementing the statutory requirements of the ALN Act and Code. River Centre progress/issues identified in other sections.

2.3 Support for Other Services - Areas where good progress has been made and how we know

- 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 WG facilitated Gateway Reviews. The Band B programme is on profile and progressing well, despite the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 Pandemic e.g. Glyncoed new school development progressing.
- 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 highly 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.
- The ET team has successfully implemented the new Capita One Online system in line with nursery and secondary admission rounds, with the reception round scheduled to commence in January 2022.

- 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; 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.
- 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 98% for primary and 99% for secondary at the start of the 2021 academic session and has been continually high over the last 4 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 (September 2023) and progressing in line with the programme and profile.
- The Council has made strong progress in line with the development of the recently WG approved Welsh in Education 10-year Strategic Plan, with full support from the WEF. In addition, Education has been successful in securing £100,000 aligned to the development of immersion/latecomer provision for Welsh Medium learners. Education ICT strategic planning processes are strong, with the project team having successfully delivered the ICP and HWB EdTech projects to date. Good progress has been made in line with the development of the Education ICT Strategy, which is scheduled for implementation from September 2022.
- The Blaenau Gwent Period Equity project has been recognised as an example of best practice by both the UK Period Poverty Task Force and the WG Period Dignity Round Table. The project continues to have a positive impact throughout Blaenau Gwent, and has supply and demand issues throughout the Pandemic. In addition, FSM direct payments and the digitally disadvantaged learner projects have continued to have a positive impact upon Blaenau Gwent pupils and families.
- 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.

2.3 Support for Other Services - Areas for improvement and how we are going to do it

- The delivery of the WESP targets is dependent upon the Welsh medium seedling and immersion proposals. The new 10 year WESP has now been approved by WG in line with the January 2022 deadlines.
- 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, but revenue funding in place until March 2023.
- There is a need to consider the management of 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 provision i.e. provider and transport shortages and secure resilience going forward.
- A review of online admissions has progressed 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 project required 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.
- Monitoring 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. A significant proportion of staff time and resource continues to be focused on recovery and renewal, with the former continuing to create conflicting priorities within Education.
- Market forces and contractor supply issues continue to be a concern for capital schemes, in line with the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic. This is subject to continued monitoring.

Risk Considerations

- There are risks associated with the revenue implications associated with the Youth Services Inspire initiative, which is currently funded through European (ESF) funding.
- Responding to the COVID-19 emergency to ensure that learner progression is maintained in safe and blended learning settings.

3.1 Quality and effectiveness of leaders and managers - Areas where good progress has been made and how we know

- 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, especially reducing to only 2 schools remaining as SCC/TAS.

- The Council considers all evidence and implements its full use of SWN's and statutory powers, where required.
- The impact of good, effective leadership is demonstrated through programme progress for example, the Band B Programme. There is strong progress through the 21st Century Schools Band A programme and approval of Band B programme for 2020 to 2026 period.
- National and regional leadership is being exercised well by senior officers e.g. regional Welsh medium POSP group.
- Appointment of a 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.
- Service Managers for Education Transformation and Business Change and Young People and Partnerships are strong appointments.
- Education and the EAS know the BG schools well and take a graduated approach to supporting the schools.
- Executive and Scrutiny arrangements are effective and there is continuity in political leadership i.e. new Leader has a thorough understanding of the Education Portfolio.
- A new Workforce Strategy was endorsed by Council in July 2021. An Education Workforce Plan is in place for implementation.
- A Leadership Development Model was agreed at CLT February 2020. Proposals for a delivery model will be planned for early 2022.
- New Council Corporate Plan priorities reinforcing Education remains a priority as well as an operating model in place, which includes agile working arrangements for the workforce from September 2021 (excluding school based staff).

3.1 Quality and effectiveness of leaders and managers - Areas for improvement and how we are going to do it

- To continue to develop officer expertise through the Professional Learning offer.
- To further self-evaluation activity across key service areas located within Local Government Education Services, for example via the HWG and Scrutiny sub-group looking at wellbeing in schools.
- Work to align the self-assessment process of the Council, as part of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, with the self-evaluation process within the Education Directorate.
- To continue to develop Member understanding and effectiveness via the Member Development Programme.

Risk Considerations

- There are risks associated ALN Reform, however, the permanent appointment to the Service Manager-Inclusion role for the Education Directorate in 2022 is a key development.

3.2 Self-evaluation and improvement planning - Areas where good progress has been made and how we know

- The Self-Evaluation Policy (reviewed September 2022) 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

self-evaluation policy arrangements. The Education Directorate is confident in its SE processes and their ability to sustain continual improvement. The Council is appropriate in its action and use of full statutory powers, where applicable, to secure the improvement required e.g. River Centre.

- 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 over the last 3 years effectively evidencing the effectiveness of our self-evaluation processes. Improvement has been secured in EFLC (out of SI), in Glyncoed/Sofrydd Primary Schools and in ALC (ESTYN monitoring visit Spring Term 2022). Progress in ALC will continue to be monitored through the ALC Corporate Group.
- The Post 16 Partnership Board established formally during 2020 and is working effectively (see Post 16 outcomes).

3.2 Self-evaluation and improvement planning - Areas for improvement and how we are going to do it

- To continue to engage Members in meaningful self-evaluation activity, for example the People- Education Scrutiny will receive a SE Update report in September 2022.
- Review the Education Improvement Plan and Tier 2 business plan priorities to bring about the improvement required.
- To continue to ensure that regional SCC/TAS protocols deliver improvements in BFS and the River Centre.

Risk Considerations

- The risk is that self-evaluation and improvement planning fails to deliver improved outcomes for learners.

3.3 Professional learning - Areas where good progress has been made and how we know

- 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.
- PDR 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.
- 14 of BG's Headteachers are actively engaging with the LA, which has benefits for both the schools and the corporate work of the Council.
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3.3 Professional learning - Areas for improvement and how we are going to do it

- 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.

Risk Considerations

- The risk is that there is less resources to support professional learning and this impacts on the Directorate and schools.

3.4 Safeguarding - Areas where good progress has been made and how we know

- The Safeguarding Matrix approach to capturing information 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 identifying learners who experience domestic violence.
- Quality assurance processes to test the robustness of safeguarding processes have been implemented and inform ongoing work in this area.
- The roll-out of MyConcern across schools is nearing completion, with all schools confirming their use of the system.
- There is an effective Safeguarding in Education Policy in place that is cognisant of the Prevent duties.
- The Quality Assurance protocol enables the Directorate to assure itself that safeguarding processes are appropriate.

3.4 Safeguarding - Areas for improvement and how we are going to do it

- Continue to develop policy and practice that is responsive to emerging school needs in a contextual safeguarding approach, this will include the establishment of the Safer Schools Partnership Board
- Review the safeguarding matrix to streamline data recording and place online to ensure 'live' updates and ensure that the matrix is considerate of the core safeguarding training as identified in the corporate WAO report as well as recording Prevent and VAWSDSV group 1 and group 2 training.

- Ensure that all school governors have a valid DBS check and providing greater flexibility in the training offer to increase the uptake of safeguarding training by school governors.
- Review the quality assurance process for 2022/23 to ensure that all areas of the LGES framework have appropriate 'dip sampling' activities in place so that the Council can assure itself that:
 - fewer children and young people are identified as missing,
 - the number of parents seeking to home educate their children is reduced; and,
 - that those children and young people accessing the provision e.g. YOS access their 25 hours' statutory entitlement to education.
- Ensure that data collection processes for RPI's and Rights Respect Equalities are routinely collated and evaluated to inform future work streams
- Utilise the data from the MyConcern software across all of BG's schools to inform developments in policy and practice.
- Following the review of self-evaluation arrangements for safeguarding for 20/21 academic year implement the new arrangements for performance reporting to Scrutiny/Executive Committees in the 2022 cycle.

Risk Considerations

- There is a risk as a result of capacity considerations in SS that the Education Directorate cannot assure itself that adequate safeguarding arrangements are in place for children and young people in Blaenau Gwent. This is a workforce consideration at a national level.

3.5 Use of Resources - Areas where good progress has been made and how we know

- The school's Individual Schools Budget (ISB) has been prioritised. Schools have been given an 8.4% uplift for 22/23. Capital has been secured to match fund the 21st Century Schools Programme. Overall, schools have healthy balances circa £4.3m across the school estate.
- Effective Education budget monitoring in place, which has also generated revenue savings.
- Financial Efficiency Savings: devised, approved and budget agreed for 2020/21. No additional revenue savings are required for financial year 22/23.
- SENCom review is complete – BG contributed extensively to the review and support the findings.
- GEMS provide good value for money.
- Monitoring 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 improving value for money.
- Schools have worked strategically with the Directorate to establish a Premature Retirement Contribution budget for staff settlement/ exit strategies.
- Project team established led by the Service Manager - Education Transformation and Business Change to oversee the SLA renewal arrangements that has realised high-level of buy-back from BG's schools. schools have signed up to the 3 year SLA arrangement for support services with the Council up to 2025.

3.5 Use of Resources - Areas for improvement and how we are going to do it

- The corporate 'Bridging the Gap' programme continues to facilitate greater effectiveness and efficiencies, where available.
- 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.
- Schools balances in the secondary/primary sectors have increased, but needs to be kept under close review going forward; particularly timely support 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 2023. 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.
- Forensic monitoring of revenue/capital budgets in line with the post COVID-19 cost pressures e.g. Home to School Transport cost pressures associated with increases in fuel costs.
- Review the monitoring of the out of county placement and home to school transport revenue budgets is required.
- Monitoring SLAs with schools from April 2022, which is circa £3m+ income to the Council.

Risk Considerations

The revenue financial position of Education is likely to be impacted in the medium to long-term by the continued response to the COVID-19. However, the indicative BG settlement from the WG is a positive position with an uplift of 8.4% and this has been confirmed in the Spring term for financial year 2022-23. The ISB has been uplifted by 8.4% in 2022-23 financial year.