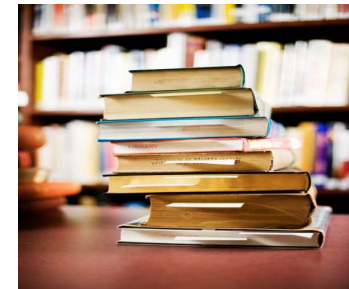




Education Directorate
Director of Education Report
Quarter 1 and 2 (April 2022 to September 2022)



*'The Education Directorate, working together with key stakeholders on a joint purpose to deliver **better schools, better citizens and better communities** – all through a children and young person centred approach'*

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Introduction

Welcome to the Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's report of the Corporate Director of Education. The report is used to highlight the key areas of progress and improvements that the service has experienced. This report provides a mid-year review of the activity undertaken to date in academic year 2022-23.

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 school leaders to improve pupil outcomes and wellbeing.

Blaenau Gwent Context

Blaenau Gwent is a place of heritage and dramatic change, with a sense of its past but its eyes firmly on the future. The area is relatively small geographically, being at most 15 miles north to south, and 8 miles east to west. Blaenau Gwent is defined physically by high hillsides dividing the three main valleys. These valleys are home to towns and villages which are largely post-heavy industrial in nature. However, each community proudly maintains its own character and traditions. Although the towns give the county borough a busy, urban feel, Blaenau Gwent is a largely rural area. Wherever you are, beautiful countryside is never far away. Figure BG01 below looks to give a visual representation of Blaenau Gwent, highlighting some of our distinctive local features.

Blaenau Gwent has 25 schools across 31 school sites and their status is detailed below:

2 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

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 5 counties in Wales to have seen a rise in the proportion of children living in poverty since 2015. 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 LSOAs in the most deprived areas across Wales at 10%, for income (19.1%), education (27.7%), and community safety (23.4%). New research from the Education Policy Institute (EPI) released in 2022 into the impact of educational inequalities across England and Wales, funded by the Nuffield Foundation, highlights the relative disadvantage experienced across the County Borough. 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 level of pupils eligible for free school meals (eFSM) in Blaenau Gwent, as of PLASC 2022, have seen a significant increase to 33.3% from the pre-Covid level of 25.5%. This represents the highest level of all LAs in Wales by a significant margin, as has been the case every year for at least the past 10 years, excepting 2018-19 where BG had the second highest level. This is reflected in schools where eFSM levels have been highest or 2nd highest in Primary, and highest in Secondary for the past 5 years. 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, but the LA has high aspirations for our learners.

Overall, the 2019 WIMD figures and high eFSM eligibility reflect very high levels of deprivation within the authority. They indicate significant challenges 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, outperformed some LAs in several measures confirming the progress being made within its schools. In Blaenau Gwent, we have high ambitions for all our learners and our socio-economic standing is a challenge that we are working to overcome to the benefit of all our children and young people and we do not accept that poverty is an excuse for poor educational achievement.

Director's Overview

Blaenau Gwent is a relatively small geographical area, with big ambitions for our schools and learners. We are determined to play our part in Wales being a first class education system with a clear ambition to increase the skills and standards of education across the County Borough. We fully support and are committed to the Welsh Government's national mission for educational transformation, including Curriculum and ALN Reforms. Blaenau Gwent's vision, purpose and strategic priorities are as follows;

Vision and Purpose

- The **Vision** for the Education Directorate is to realise a **school-led self-improving system**.
- The **Purpose** for the Education Directorate is to create '**Better Schools, Better Citizens and Better Communities**'.
- The **Vision and Purpose** are both driven by a **child centred approach** and placing **children and young people** at the **heart** of all our **work and decisions**.

Education Improvement Plan (EIP) – 5 Priorities

- **Improving educational standards and wellbeing** for pupils, particularly at KS4;
- **Securing quality ALN/Inclusion provision**, particularly to support Vulnerable groups of learners and those who are eFSM;
- **Transforming education** in line with responsive school support services and a school estate that is fit for the 21st Century;
- **Delivering effective young people and partnership provision**, with a focus on lifelong learning and leisure/recreation provision to meet community need; and,
- **Enhancing the performance culture for Education and Leisure** that delivers **better educational outcomes and improved value for money**.



Lynn Phillips - Director Education



Cllr Sue Edmunds - Cabinet Member Education

Local Political Leadership, Governance and Accountability

The structure of the Education Directorate provides clear levels of management and accountability. The Council has a clear governance and accountability framework in place which all directorates are signed up to. This framework identifies how reporting and monitoring works throughout the Council to create a 'golden thread'. This framework is produced corporately, and Education is compliant, the services also have additional regulatory requirements as part of the Estyn Local Government Education Services (LGES) framework.

The Education Directorate is subject to external/internal audit, inspection and regulatory review by Estyn. On a termly basis, the Director of Education and/or Senior Education Managers meet with Estyn to discuss achievements, performance and key challenges. The Directorate has one Cabinet Member who has portfolio responsibility for People - Education (including the Aneurin Leisure Trust). The Directorate is scrutinised by the People Scrutiny Committee. Regular liaison meetings are held with the Directorate, the Cabinet Member and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Scrutiny Committee.

Engagement with Members

Aside from the work programmes for Scrutiny, Cabinet and Council, the Education Directorate also regularly engages with all Elected Members via a series of briefing sessions, aimed at informing Members of key areas of the Directorate to enhance their learning and understanding. The following sessions have taken place or are scheduled as part of the Member Development Programme:

Induction Programme:

- The Work of the Individual Directorates – Education
- Corporate Parenting/Safeguarding Responsibilities

Member Development Programme

- Directorate Briefing Session for the People Scrutiny Committee
- Safeguarding Online Course - Mandatory for All Members
- Safeguarding in Education
- Education Transformation
- Youth Service
- Estyn Preparedness
- Working with the EAS
- Post 16 Learner Outcomes
- Aneurin Leisure Trust

How People Are Shaping Our Services

The Education Directorate is committed to providing high quality services to its citizens and uses various engagement methodologies to understand if the service is making the intended outcomes or if amendments to service delivery need to be considered. Throughout the period a variety of engagement events have taken place:

- Focus group sessions undertaken to understand what C & YP understand about wellbeing and mental health

- VAWSDSV
- 4 Children's Grand Council sessions were run over the last academic year.
- School councils continue to operate across school settings
- 4 LGBTQ+ support groups available within schools to understand C & YP views, it's a place where they can meet discuss, express and offload if needed.
- Focus group carried out with Young Carers to understand the impact of the Young Carers passport.
- A democracy event took place where school from secondary came to understand the democracy journey and how they can be involved. 6 sessions took place throughout the day with 30-32 children attending each session.
- Schools receive weekly bulletins covering strategic and operational developments.
- Schools have received links to surveys for C & YP to have input into programme or policy development.
- Young people from Blaenau Gwent Youth Forum contribute to the scrutiny committee arrangements.
- C & YP from schools attend the Youth Forum which meets every month, there are 8 members of the forum and it focusses on working on priorities that matter to them as well as feeding into policy or consultations. Some of the Youth Forum have now started college, however, were part of the BG Education System.
- Positive Body Image Campaign | [Decide Me - Positive Body Image Campaign | Blaenau Gwent CBC \(blaenau-gwent.gov.uk\)](#)
- Let's Go Zero https://youtube.com/watch?v=KKFGQ_q90CM&feature=share&si=EMSlkaECMiOmarE6JChQQ Regional Mental Health Campaign Development.
- Youth Question time event 22-[Gwent Youth Question Time 2022 | Blaenau Gwent CBC \(blaenau-gwent.gov.uk\)](#)

Inspection of Blaenau Gwent Local Government Education Service

In September 2022, Blaenau Gwent Council received a letter from Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales, stating that the Council will be subject to an Estyn inspection, in line with the Local Government Education Services (LGES) framework, and that the inspection will take place between 28th November to 2nd December 2022.

The inspection is to be carried out in accordance with the inspection framework and the guidance 'for the inspection of Local Government Education Services'.

The three inspection areas of the Local Government Education Services Framework (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

Blaenau Gwent's 4 Local Questions for the Inspection

1. How well does the local authority challenge and support non-maintained settings and schools to improve?
2. How well does the local authority tackle inequalities in education experiences and outcomes for children living in poverty?
3. How well does the local authority support schools to promote respectful relationships and address negative behaviour effectively?
4. How well does the local authority ensure that the interests of learners are above all others in its planning for schools and other education provision?

Prior to the core inspection week, Estyn will look to survey local staff, learners, parents and other local citizens with an interest in education services. A preliminary visit will also be held around 2 weeks before the core inspection week to interview key stakeholders.

As per usual practice, the Council is to receive preliminary feedback and findings from the Inspection team on 2nd December 2022. This will be followed up by a final letter which will include findings and any recommendations for improvement. This letter is not expected until February in the New Year.

Departmental Priorities 2022/27

Education Directorate Plan

- Improving educational standards and wellbeing for pupils, particularly at KS4;
- Securing quality ALN/Inclusion provision, particularly to support vulnerable groups of learners and those who are eFSM;
- Transforming education in line with responsive school support services and a school estate that is fit for the 21st Century;
- Delivering effective young people and partnership provision, with a focus on lifelong learning and leisure/recreation provision to meet community need; and
 - Enhancing the performance culture for Education and Leisure that delivers better educational outcomes and improved value for money.

Education Transformation and Business Change – Tier 1

- To ensure an effective Admissions and the Planning of Pupil places process to secure effective access to education, whilst also fulfilling the team's statutory responsibilities and ensuring regulatory compliance;
- To ensure an effective Home to School transport provision is in place statutory responsibilities and ensuring regulatory compliance;
- Delivery of projects to transform the ICT and digitalisation education provision and to ensure strategies and sustainability plans are in place;
- Managing and improving the existing school estate provision Facilities management, Health & Safety, emergency planning;
- Effective delivery of transformation projects to ensure an informed approach to school organisation and the school estate is fit for the future -The Sustainable Community for Learning agenda (21st Century Schools), capacity [reviews](#);
- Development & delivery of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) and associated projects;
- Education Transformation to support delivery of the Sustainable Development Principles; and
- Deliver Strong human, financial, risk and performance management within the Education Transformation Team.

Improvement and Inclusion Plan – Tier 2

- Minimise the impact and recovery from COVID-19 on learner development and progress;
- Improve wellbeing for learners at all stages of development, with a focus on attendance, exclusions and equity;
- Secure strong progress in skills, particularly with reading;
- Support schools to ensure all ALN processes are in place in order to meet statutory requirements;
- Ensure high quality provision is in place to support vulnerable learners in mainstream schools, resource bases and in special schools, including eFSM learners;
- Ensure high quality leadership that secures good progress for all learners;
- Support schools who are identified as causing concern through regional and local protocols to secure improvement;
- Development and management of workforce capacity and capability whilst delivering effective services within financial resources available; and
- Inclusion & Improvement contributes to meeting the Sustainable Development Principles.

Improvement and Inclusion Plan – Tier 1

- Support schools to ensure pupils with ALN and vulnerable learners make good progress;
- Ensure the ALN and Inclusion service have policies and procedures in place in order to meet statutory requirements, including a review of Resource Bases;
- Ensure the IPS service remains responsive to learners' and schools' needs;
- Development and management of workforce capacity and capability whilst delivering effective services within financial resources available;
- Ensure safeguarding quality assurance processes remain effective and inform the work of the directorate;
- Work in partnership with the EAS to support schools with Curriculum for Wales and skills;
- Ensure school improvement policies and procedures are in place in order to meet statutory requirements;
- Work in partnership with the EAS to support schools with leadership; and
- As appropriate, develop packages of support for schools.

Young People and Partnership Plan and Aneurin Leisure Trust – Tier 1

- Create and maintain sustainability of the youth service by securing funding and spaces to deliver effective youth services;
- Deliver a wide range of support and provision to young people aged 11-25 based on identified need;
- Implement the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (YEPF) across the Borough, to ensure young people remain in or enter education, employment or training (reducing NEET figures);
- Ensure consistency and quality in service delivery across the youth service and wider youth support services;
- Ensure the Youth Service and Inclusion Services work collaboratively;
- Manage the Young People and Partnerships service area effectively in terms of staff and financial resources available (both internal and external);
- Post 16 – Ensure Effective Post 16 Partnership arrangements are in place and embedded;
- ALT/Awen/Head 4 Arts: - Ensure Effective Partnership and Commissioning arrangements are in place for Sports and Leisure, Arts and Culture, Adult Community Learning and Libraries; and
- Young People and Partnerships to support delivery of the Sustainable Development Principles.

Areas of Progress and Improvement

- The Education Directorate received Full Council approval (2020-2021) to establish a new leadership and management structure that includes additional capacity for school improvement and inclusion. Although interim capacity has been affected by staff changes and maternity leave;
- 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 and the Service Manager – Inclusion;
- The WG ALN National Transformation secondment has concluded, however BG and WG have agreed a collaborative approach for the officer to work part-time via a grant award and part-time for BG's ALN Reform implementation, which provides additional strategic capacity within the SI&I team;
- The Corporate and Education Directorate's response to COVID-19 has been effective and this is discussed in the Estyn Thematic Review, and has been followed up in the Summer Letter (2021) commentary;
- BG knows its schools well overall as identified in the annual regulatory feedback. 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, Science and Capped 9 improved across the board since 2019, the results in 2021-22 were realised through external examinations, but noting the post Centre Determined Grades moderation;
- The 2022 KS4 results were positive and in line with the SDP targets set by the 4 secondary settings. There were improvements in 29 out of 32 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 Phase 1 and Phase 2 summary evaluation implementation documents evidence the progress made across the schools;
- 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 good with a 97.8% overall pass rate for A* - E, which is in line with the Welsh average of 98% and the pass rate for grades A* - C and A* - A have improved significantly;
- 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 progress 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 1.6% remain at low levels i.e., 9 young people;
- The School Based Counselling Service provides good support, and this is evidenced through the evaluation reports;

- Strong progress through the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme (formerly 21st Century Schools) programme with robust programme management arrangements in place as acknowledged in the WG facilitated Gateway Review. The Band B programme is well underway, an investment of circa £31m 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 (full planning approval);
- Headteacher induction and support programme very well received by aspiring and new Headteachers (September 2022);
- 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 to engage in digital platforms including the co-ordination and distribution of technology. ICT in School Strategy to be finalised in the Spring term;
- Good Early Years provision;
- 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 i.e., Abertillery Learning Community. The ALC Corporate Group monitors performance and financial sustainability of the setting. The LA has passported 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.

Areas where further improvement is required

- Higher levels of language acquisition and reading across the board, but particularly in our very young children in early years.
- Improve attainment of eFSM pupils and closing the achievement gap, particularly our more-able pupils throughout education;
- Improve school attendance in both primary and secondary sectors;
- Focus on Schools Causing Concern (SCC), particularly the two schools currently in an Estyn category. It is recognised that in both schools there needs to be pace injected into their improvement journeys. 'One Plan' monitoring in place for both schools;
- Reduce school exclusions and support parents/carers who opt to Elective Home Educate (EHE), with increases linked to COVID. There are 3 schools with identified higher-levels of exclusions that will require targeted interventions;
- Secure external funding for European Social Fund (ESF) programmes e.g. Inspire;
- Pupil progress monitoring at an LA level for self-evaluation purposes; and,
- 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 and the Cost-of-Living crisis. The provisional settlement received from Welsh Government in December 2021 indicates an uplift to funding of 3.5% and 2.4% for 2023/24 and 2024/25 respectively. However, given the current economic and political climate and the Cost-of-Living crisis there is a risk that this could impact on the financial position of the Council and Education and this is currently being reviewed in line with the MTFs.

Progress against the Priorities

Improving educational standards and wellbeing for pupils, particularly at KS4

Self-Assessment – The Education Directorate knows its schools well overall, and this is evidenced by the regulatory feedback received annually.

School inspection and school categorisation profiling has improved significantly with no primary schools in follow up. There has been a reduction in Schools Causing Concern from 6 schools in 2019 to only 2 schools in 2022. ALC has been formally removed from an Estyn Significant Improvement category and the SWN has been lifted. There is a monitoring visit that took place for BFS in the Summer term and the focus remains on the quality and consistency of T&L. The pace of improvement remains under review. The River Centre has been the subject to an Estyn inspection and the pre-inspection report has been returned to the inspectorate. This setting has gone into an Estyn category following a recent inspection and will be supported via a Multi-Agency approach. The Post Inspection Action Plan has been produced and weekly monitoring is in place.

The Local Authority has requested that EAS support schools on reading skills as a priority following discussions with Joint Headteachers. ALN Reform implementation is on-going with increasing confidence across schools. Education DMT has agreed half-termly monitoring of attendance and exclusions with an attendance campaign planned for the Autumn, in conjunction with Corporate Communications.

2022 results for GCSE L2 English, Maths, Science and Capped 9 improved across the board since 2019, the results in 2021-22 were realised through external examinations, but noting the post Centre Determined Grades moderation. The 2022 KS4 results were in line with the SDP targets set by the 4 secondary settings. The results are shown in the Performance Data Pack for self-evaluation purposes. GCSE A*/A and A*-C grades improved in English, Science and Maths. 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 98.4% for BG learners at Coleg Gwent settings.

The Youth Service exceeded that of the all-Wales means for reach and accredited learning outcomes. The levels of NEETs at 1.6% are at their lowest levels i.e., 9 young people.

Securing quality ALN/Inclusion provision, particularly to support vulnerable groups of learners and those who are eFSM

Self-Assessment –

The Education Directorate has recently made permanent appointments to the Inclusion team, including the Service Manager for Inclusion.

The Welsh Government ALN National Transformation secondment has concluded; however, it has been agreed between the Council and Welsh Government for the officer to continue to work collaboratively, part time via a grant award and part time for the Council's ALN Reform implementation, which provides additional strategic capacity within the School Improvement and Inclusion Team.

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.

Data updates including eFSM, attendance and exclusions will be reviewed in the autumn term, however, there are initial indications that the KS4 eFSM gap has reduced.

A review of the ALN/Inclusion Strategy and associated policies has been undertaken taken through the democratic process via People Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet for approval. However, there is a need to engage Headteachers in strategic ALN developments more consistently.

Discussions have been taking place with Headteachers with regards to creating a Vulnerable Learner Panel (VLP), which will undertake school level monitoring to support a reduction in school exclusions and also provide support to parents and carers who opt to elective home educate, which has seen an increase since COVID.

The River Centre is a School Causing Concern and is subject to Statutory Warning Notice (SWN) letter for improvement. This setting has gone into an Estyn category following a recent inspection and will be supported via a Multi-Agency approach. There are very early signs of progress and the primary provision is stable for learners.

Transforming education in line with responsive school support services and a school estate that is fit for the 21st Century

Self-Assessment –

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 which has recently been agreed by Cabinet.

Good progress has been made against the Welsh Education Strategic Plan (WESP), including Welsh Government approval of the Blaenau Gwent 10 Year WESP and the new Welsh medium seedling school moving to project implementation stage (full planning approval). The delivery of the WESP targets will be largely delivered through the Welsh medium seedling and immersion proposals. Momentum needs to be maintained with regards to securing additional Welsh-medium education provision for Blaenau Gwent for the Council to deliver on the outcomes of the Blaenau Gwent Welsh in Education Strategic Plan and meet WG deadlines for completion of the 10-year plan.

Surplus places are reducing to the targets set in the School Organisation Policy at 15%. The LA does have some elements of sufficiency of school places emerging that will need to be monitored closely, especially in the secondary/ special school sectors.

Strong progress through the 21st Century Schools programme with robust programme management arrangements in place as acknowledged in the WG facilitated Gateway Review. The Band B programme is well underway an investment of circa £26m into the school estate and this funding opportunity has been identified to target resources for ALN learners. The suitability and condition of the school estate is improving with circa 61% categorised as A/B and the only D category (Glyncoed) forms part of the Band D investment programme.

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 in Spring 2023.

Medium and long term plans for Pen-y-Cwm are to be developed in line with the increasing demand. The LA will work with the new leadership team to ensure the school's capacity requirements are met.

Delivering effective young people and partnership provision, with a focus on lifelong learning and leisure/recreation provision to meet community need

Self-Assessment – The Youth Services provide effective information, support and learning opportunities for young people aged 11-25 and supports young people through earlier transitions from 10 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, Play Therapy Service (year 3 -5) and the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (YEPP), 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.

The Youth Service is delivering against its priorities with its latest report demonstrating continued progress. The work of the team is comprehensive and highlights demonstrable progress against the key success criteria. However, there is still work to do in relation to the sustainability of the ESF Programmes e.g., Inspire however, this is potentially being mitigated through the Shared Prosperity Funding.

The relationship with the Leisure Trust has improved significantly and their performance reporting post COVID is strong, particularly the investment in fitness provision realising new memberships. Leisure Trust developments are captured effectively through the Leisure and Libraries Strategic Board and the ALT performance reports e.g., Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS).

Some challenges have been faced within recruitment into the Youth Service, owing to the part time nature of the work and also the requirements for all new staff to be qualified to level 2 and registered with EWC. This has been mitigated by allowing youth support worker roles to be filled without the required qualification but with an agreed timeframe for when the level 2 and 3 qualifications can be achieved.

- In 2021/22, 17% (1961 individual young people) of 11–25-year-olds voluntarily registered with the Youth Service with an additional 9524 contacts made with anonymous (not registered with the service) young people. This is 1% lower than the 2019/20 pre Covid data and shows that the reach has almost returned to pre-pandemic levels, despite still working within restrictions at the beginning of the year.
- In 2020/21, the last available all Wales data, Blaenau Gwent placed 4th (best) across Wales and above the Welsh national average (9%) for population reach and 2nd across the region and 2nd across the family mean.
- The Youth Service 9,524 anonymous contacts during 2120/22 were made through the 11-25 Counselling Service, detached youth work, outreach and out of school activities and events.
- The Youth Service has a well-trained workforce highlighted again in the Youth Work in Wales 2020/2021 Statistical Release where Blaenau Gwent is 3rd (best) in Wales, as having a trained, skilled and qualified workforce. Blaenau Gwent was 1st across the region and 1st across the family mean.
- Current data indicates 1.6% of learners becoming NEET (9 learners) at the end of 2020/2021. The all-Wales figure has not yet been published. However, this is consistently maintaining the lowest number of young people becoming NEET.
- KS5 outcomes continue to improve especially for the higher grades, but remain below the Wales mean average.

Enhancing the performance culture for Education and Leisure that delivers better educational outcomes and improved value for money

Self-Assessment – The revenue financial position of the Education Directorate and schools has improved significantly with school provisional balances in a favourable position and a break even budget out turn for the capital budget. This financial position has been achieved by redressing the budget deficit in one school (Abertillery Learning Community). The ALC Corporate Group monitors performance and financial sustainability of the setting.

The LA has passported an 8.4% uplift to schools via the ISB in 2022-23.

The Council's financial position for 2023-24 is anticipated to be difficult, so mitigation through the revenue budget setting process will be crucial for sustainability reasons. Initial proposals for revenue savings to be identified.

Schools are now strategically contributing to a full systems approach and performance culture. Self-evaluation work is embedded as well as collaborative leadership arrangements which will continue through the Headteacher Working Groups (covering Self-Evaluation/Curriculum/ALN Reforms).

The Council's Corporate Risk Register includes one corporate risk with a specific link to the Education Directorate and this is relating to schools in an Estyn category. The Education Directorate Risk Register has 7 risks, with 3 having a high residual status.

The Education Directorate Workforce Plan has been adopted for 2022-26 and is now in the implementation stages.

The Headteacher induction and support programme has been well received by new and aspiring Headteachers.

The Member Development Programme is underway and new Members are engaging and providing very good feedback.

Effective ICT support has been provided to support learners who are digitally disadvantaged to enable them to engage in digital platforms including the coordination and distribution of technology.

Pupil progress monitoring at a LA and school level for self-evaluation purposes is an area for development, therefore, the commissioning of progress and assessment in conjunction with all schools for 2022-23 is under consideration.

Education Performance Indicators – Key Stage 4

This summary represents KS4 performance in 2022. This data is only used for self-evaluation purposes and not for accountability reasons.

Blaenau Gwent Performance Summary

- With the suspension of the requirement to report attainment levels on GCSE Results Day, there is insufficient data to analyse the performance of eFSM and non eFSM pupils.
- Of the 7 Performance Indicators reported in 2022, Blaenau Gwent saw an improvement in performance in all indicators, except for Level 1 which declined.

Capped 9

- Blaenau Gwent performance improved from 331.4 in 2019 to 344.2 in 2022 (All Schools).
- Blaenau Gwent performance improved from 347.1 in 2019 to 361.0 in 2022 (4 Secondary Schools).
- Improved performance in all Secondary Schools.

Literacy Measure

- Blaenau Gwent performance improved from 35.8 in 2019 to 38.3 in 2022 (All Schools).
- Blaenau Gwent performance improved from 37.5 in 2019 to 40.1 in 2022 (4 Secondary Schools).
- Improved performance in all Secondary Schools.

Numeracy Measure

- Blaenau Gwent performance improved from 32.7 in 2019 to 35.1 in 2022 (All Schools).
- Blaenau Gwent performance improved from 34.3 in 2019 to 36.8 in 2022 (4 Secondary Schools).
- Improved performance in all Secondary Schools.

Science Measure

- Blaenau Gwent performance improved from 31.5 in 2019 to 36.1 in 2022 (All Schools).
- Blaenau Gwent performance improved from 33.0 in 2019 to 37.8 in 2022 (4 Secondary Schools).
- Improved performance in all Secondary Schools

Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge

- Blaenau Gwent performance improved from 35.8 in 2019 to 37.3 in 2022 (All Schools).
- Blaenau Gwent performance improved from 37.5 in 2019 to 39.1 in 2022 (4 Secondary Schools).
- Improved performance in all Secondary Schools

Level 1 Threshold

- Blaenau Gwent performance improved from 92.5% in 2019 to 91.1% in 2022 (All Schools).
- Blaenau Gwent performance improved from 96.9% in 2019 to 95.5% in 2022 (4 Secondary Schools).
- Improved performance in 2 out of 4 Secondary Schools.
- One of the schools where performance declined has a Resource Base. The second school where performance declined went from 100% to 98.6%.

5A*-A Grade GCSEs

- Blaenau Gwent performance improved from 9.9% in 2019 to 14.8% in 2022 (All Schools).
- Blaenau Gwent performance improved from 10.4% in 2019 to 15.5% in 2022 (4 Secondary Schools).
- Improved performance 3 Secondary schools, with a slight decline (-0.1%) in 4th Secondary School.

Legacy L2 Inc. E/W & M

- Despite this indicator being removed from the GCSE suite of performance indicators, all 4 schools calculated the measure.
- Blaenau Gwent performance improved from 43.0% in 2019 to 49.2% in 2022 (All Schools).
- Blaenau Gwent performance improved from 45.0% in 2019 to 51.6% in 2022 (4 Secondary Schools).
- Improved performance all 4 Secondary schools.

Budget - Quarter 1 & 2 (April 2022 to September 2022)

Budget Area		Budget	Forecast	Variance	
		£	£	£	%
1	Individual Schools Budget	50,430,260	50,430,260	0	0.00
2	Education Improvement Grant	267,730	267,730	0	0.00
3	Other Costs	725,420	736,864	-11,444	-1.58
4	Supporting SEN - Schools	1,730,430	1,583,211	147,219	8.51
5	Strategic Management	2,264,410	2,265,610	-1,200	-0.05
6	Assuring Access to Schools	2,439,820	2,925,714	-485,894	-19.92
7	Facilitating School Improvement	396,350	398,131	-1,781	-0.45
8	Supporting SEN - LEA	380,730	296,112	84,618	22.23
9	Further Education & Training	135,960	144,996	-9,036	-6.65
10	Youth Service	345,390	370,218	-24,828	-7.19
11	Other Expenditure	143,850	123,075	20,775	14.44
12	Education Departmental Budget	195,970	133,430	62,540	31.91
13	Corporate Recharges	4,671,690	4,671,689	1	0.00
	Leisure	4,176,620	4,171,106	5,514	0.13
	Grand Total	68,304,630	68,518,146	-213,516	-0.31

Education Risk Register

Ref No.	Description of Risk	Update	Residual Score
EDDRR7 CRR25	<p>The school currently in receipt of Council Intervention fails to make appropriate progress against the Statutory Warning Notice to Improve and their Post Inspection Action Plans.</p>	<p>Continuing the work with Schools Causing Concern (SCC), particularly the two schools currently in an Estyn category. BFS 'One Plan' monitoring and Multi-Agency approach for the River Centre. The River Centre is subject to Statutory Warning Notice (SWN) letter for improvement. This setting has gone into the Estyn category of Special Measures following a recent inspection and will be supported via a Multi-Agency approach similar to the BFS model. The Post Inspection Action Plan (PIAP) has been produced and returned to Estyn together with a Health and safety response letter with weekly RC PIAP meetings with LA partners to support with and monitor progress against the PIAP in place. The setting has significant shortcomings identified, however, very early-stage progress is being made through the leadership of the Interim Executive Head teacher and the LA appointed Chair of Governors. Planning for further work in the secondary site scheduled to start October 2022.</p>	<p>High</p>
EDDRR8	<p>Failure to minimise the risks associated with pupil regression linked to COVID-19 learning disruption and to maximise learner progression.</p>	<p>The Recovery and Renewal Plan is in place as well as the performance data pack. There has been a 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. KS4 2022 results for GCSE L2 English, Maths, Science and Capped 9 improved across the board since 2019, the results in 2021-22 were realised through external examinations, but noting the post Centre Determined Grades moderation. The 2022 KS4 results were positive and in line with the SDP targets set by the 4 secondary settings. The results are shown in the Performance Data Pack for self-evaluation purposes. GCSE A*/A and A*-C grades improved in English, Science and Maths. 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 98.4% for BG learners at Coleg Gwent settings. Post 16 vocational results to be released in October 2022. BG's schools across the board are working towards the use of progress methods across the board in 2022 to assess learner progress. This data will only be used to inform self-evaluation purposes. Reading and supporting learners entitled to eFSM are LA priorities, however, the attainment gap to non eFSM is closing at KS4.</p> <p>Discussions with headteachers and assessment company about an LA approach to assessment partly funded by the LA, to help identify where pupils currently are and what support they need/next steps. Arrangements to be finalised October 2022</p>	<p>High</p>

Ref No.	Description of Risk	Update	Residual Score
EDDRR9	Dependency on funding around ESF Inspire projects in youth service	Risk reviewed - positive trajectory	High
EDDRR1	Failure of schools in Blaenau Gwent to adapt and change accordingly to the requirements of the new curriculum and national agenda of the Welsh Government as laid out in the National reform agenda document "Education for Wales: Our national Mission"	<p>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 for Wales/ALN Reforms). 2 secondary schools have adopted CfW from September 2022. Phase 1 ALN Reform implementation is effective as discussed in the TCS Evaluative Summary Report and the 4 recommendations are being taken forward for action.</p> <p>WG have provided schools with further support on the implementation of the RSE Curriculum. All schools involved in Professional Discussions in September 2022 show good progress towards/implementation of CfW.</p>	Medium
EDDRR3 CRR4	Safeguarding - Failure to ensure adequate. Safeguarding arrangements are in place for children & young adults in Blaenau Gwent.	<p>Schools are presently updating the Keeping Learners Safe self-evaluation returns for the 2022/23 academic year. The Safeguarding in Education Manager continues to work closely with the setting that was identified as needing specific support in last year's self- evaluation report and progress is being made to address those areas. Quality assurance visits to school's settings have also been undertaken during the period.</p> <p>One school, which is identified as a School Causing Concern, has been inspected with the team identifying safeguarding and health and safety concerns, which encompassed site and building issues. The areas of improvements identified have either been completed or are in train. The Directorate is undertaking a quality assurance review of all health and safety facilities functions to ensure that any further potential risks are identified and appropriately managed.</p> <p>All schools have now registered to use the My Concern System with one school requiring training. Informal feedback received is promising but a more detailed review will be completed at the end of the autumn term.</p> <p>The annual self- evaluation of safeguarding for the 2021/22 academic year has been completed which includes the establishment of the Strategic Safer Schools Partnership Board and the need to progress the Peer-on-Peer Sexual abuse action plan and Respect and Resilience action plan.</p> <p>There remains an invariable link to the risks identified in Social Services.</p>	Medium

Ref No.	Description of Risk	Update	Residual Score
EDDRR4	Failure to create a sustainable and successful Abertillery Learning Community that delivers good outcomes for learners.	The ALC Corporate Group will be considering the commissioning on an independent consultant to review ALC's medium term financial planning arrangements in the Autumn term. The ALC out-turn position for financial year 2021-22 was a surplus circa £240,000, which maintains their positive position for 2 years.	Medium
EDDRR5	Failure to deliver an effective ICT strategy in line with the WG Education Digital Standards, which facilitates and enhances delivery aligned to the Digital Competency Framework and the new Curriculum for Wales.	Draft Strategy to be reviewed and agreed with schools in the Autumn/Spring term	Low
EDDRR10 CRR25	Failure of school (RC) to improve following the issue of a pre-warning and statutory warning notice	The River Centre Learning Community has been identified as a School Causing Concern and the LA has used its powers of intervention including appointment of a LA chair of governors as well as additional governors. There is an interim Exec Headteacher in place in collaboration with Ebbw Fawr Learning Community. The RC Learning Community was subject to an Estyn inspection in July 2022. This risk can now be retired as updates are being provided in Corporate Risk CRR25.	High
EDDRR11	Internet connectivity in schools affected by PSBA Websafe Internet Filtering.	The PSBA monitoring is effective at a national, regional and local level and BG's schools and the associated ICT platforms are stable. Likelihood reduced to low but to remain on the Directorate Risk Register to be kept under review.	Low
EDDRR12	Impact on the deliverability 21st Century School Programme	Contract awarded for Glyncoed project, however due to market forces this was 20% higher than originally anticipated, this is therefore having an impact on the current programme and the Council will ultimately deliver less schemes than was originally anticipated within the programme envelope. Representations are being made with Welsh Government.	High

Ref No.	Description of Risk	Update	Residual Score
EDDRR13	Lack of sustainability for open access provision has resulted in a reduction in the support and provision for young people and children in community settings.	The Young People and Partnership FADE is comprehensive and highlights demonstrable progress against the key success criteria. However, there is still work to do in relation to sustainability of the ESF Programmes. Leisure Trust developments are captured effectively through the Leisure and Libraries Strategic Board and the ALT performance reports e.g., Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS) return from WG. Provisional NEETs data released at 1.6% so remaining stable and in line with the Wales mean average.	Medium
EDDRR6	If the Directorate does not have the appropriate capacity and capability in the workforce, the result will be an unacceptable impact on the ability to deliver services effectively.	All leadership appointments now made – risk to be deescalated from the Education DRR.	Low

Glossary

ALC – Abertillery Learning Community

ALN – Additional Learning Needs

ALT – Aneurin Leisure Trust

BFS – Brynmawr Foundation School

CAGs – Centre Assessed Grades

CDGs – Centre Determined Grades

CLT – Corporate Leadership Team

CSSR – Celebrate, Support, Share and Refine

EAS – Education Achievement Service

eFSM – eligible for Free School Meals

EIP – Education Improvement Plan

ESF – European Social Fund

EWC – Education Workforce Council

FADE – Self Evaluation (Focus, Analysis, Do, Evaluation)

FWPs – Forward Work Programmes

GAVO – Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations

I2A – Inspire to Achieve

I2W – Inspire to Work

KS – Key Stage

LA – Local Authority

LGES – Local Government Education Services

LSOA – Lower Super Output Area

NEET – Not in Education, Employment or Training

RPIs – Restricted Physical Interventions

SCC – Schools Causing Concern

SE – Self-Evaluation

SEBD – Social, Emotional, Behavioural Difficulties

SER – Self-Evaluation Report

SDP – School Development Plan

SOP – Strategic Outline Plan

WBL – Work Based Learning

WIMD – Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation

WG – Welsh Government

Contact Details

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