

Regional Business Plan 2023-2025

(June 2023 - March 2025)

Consultation Version
(March 2023)



Forward

The Educational Achievement Service (EAS) is the school improvement service of the five local authorities in South East Wales: Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen.

The EAS is owned by the five Councils and operates within a robust governance structure which is populated by representative Elected Members from each Council. The EAS has been in operation since September 2012 and has undergone many changes during this period.

Through the commissioning of the three-year regional Business Plan the EAS delivers key school improvement support to all schools and educational settings across the South East Wales region. The EAS endeavours to work in partnership local authorities, schools and settings and wider stakeholders, ensuring that service delivery remains of a consistently high standard and meets the needs of the system. The service welcomes external expertise and challenge to support continued improvement and will remain agile and responsive to regional need.

EAS Values:

Integrity: Doing what is right and delivering what we promise by providing a high support and high challenge environment.

Innovation: We promise an innovative culture and attitude. We will challenge and aim for excellence in all we do.

Collaboration: We value everyone and work together to achieve our vision.

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1. Introduction

Last year we reviewed how we constructed and communicated our Business Plan. We decided it was timely to review and adapt our processes to make them more accessible to a wider audience. We used a new approach to help us articulate the changes and impact we want to make as the regional school improvement service for South East Wales and the connections and actions needed that will allow that change and impact to be successfully achieved.

The current Business Plan spans three years, 2022-2025, this was agreed by the Joint Executive Group (JEG) and through each Local Authority (LA) Cabinet in the summer term 2022. This document contains the next iteration of this three-year plan and covers the period from June 2023 to April 2025.

This year we have further refined our success criteria so that we can better report on the impact of our work so that it aligns more explicitly to the EAS vision of developing all schools as learning organisations. We have made sure that our own evaluations, trends in school and local authorities needs and priorities, national policy and inspection findings are captured. These directly inform our priorities and success criteria. We have also included a Partnership Annex that is specific to each local authority's needs and priorities for the coming year.

We have prioritised our high level and high-risk areas, and further details and activities are in our Detailed Delivery Plans. We have captured several important 'Assumptions: Processes that should be in place' for each Business Plan priority to ensure this activity is visible in the system. This means that we can make sure we undertake the range of statutory activities on behalf of local authorities as well as measure the penetration of our work and track individuals' and schools' development and engagement.

We fully recognise the strength of our collaboration and partnerships with stakeholders and our role in working increasingly together, so we have identified, as in our monitoring arrangements how we are dependent on effective joint working to succeed.

2. Impact: Key features of school improvement

As we review our work in schools, we are looking for indicators to demonstrate change at leadership and governance levels; improved teaching and learning; school and setting wide improvement in policy and practice; learner progress and growing capacity in the system. Our expectations are clear and set out in the EAS Business Plan success criteria, our vision and values.

The EAS uses three research informed models to consider three important questions that helps frame the Intent, Implementation and Impact approach as outlined below. Each model allows us to use a common language to plan, implement and evaluate the impact of the work of the EAS.

1. What are we trying to achieve?
2. Where are we?
3. How will we know?



INTENT

What are we trying to do? What is our intention? This considers what characterises effective school improvement and helps frame clear success criteria to measure impact against.



IMPLEMENTATION

Where are we on this improvement partnership journey? How can we evaluate where we are and where we go next? Where are we in the implementation of our organisational change journey? Is this supporting the school to become an effective learning organisation?



IMPACT

What impact are we having on an individual or organisational improvement journey? What first hand evidence can we use to capture progress and impact of professional learning? How long with this impact take, over what time scales can we expect to see impact? Are schools and settings better placed to lead and evaluate their own progress and plan for ongoing improvement? Is there an improvement in learners outcomes?

3. School Improvement

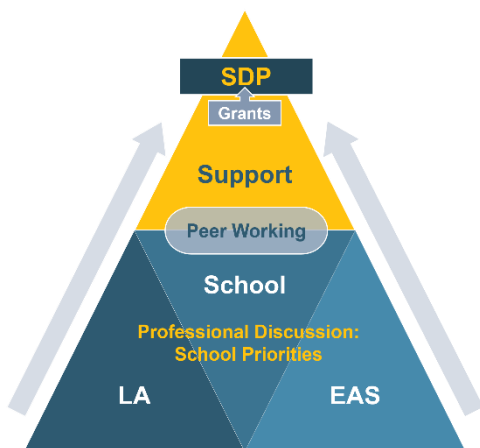
In August 2022 WG published the School Improvement Guidance: Framework for evaluation, improvement and accountability, which aims to:

- strengthen the effectiveness of self-evaluation and improvement planning by schools
- replace the national categorisation system with a similar support process that does not require the publication of school categories
- strengthen and provide clarity about the separation between evaluation / improvement activities and the accountability system
- clearly assign the roles and responsibilities of different bodies in a self-improving system.

This guidance provides a new point of reference for schools, pupil referral units, local authorities, diocesan authorities, regional consortia and Estyn, which outlines Welsh Governments expectations of these organisations in contributing to school improvement, in the context of their wider legal duties.

Within the context of Curriculum for Wales, the Welsh Government guidance aims to foster sustainable school improvement through a clear framework for evaluation, improvement and accountability. The majority of energy and focus in the system should be on delivering school improvement, guided by effective self-evaluation, improvement planning and support in all schools. To be successful, it is crucial that all aspects of the school system are aligned with and support the Curriculum for Wales along with its underlying principles.

The regional model for school improvement has been designed with all partners and includes:



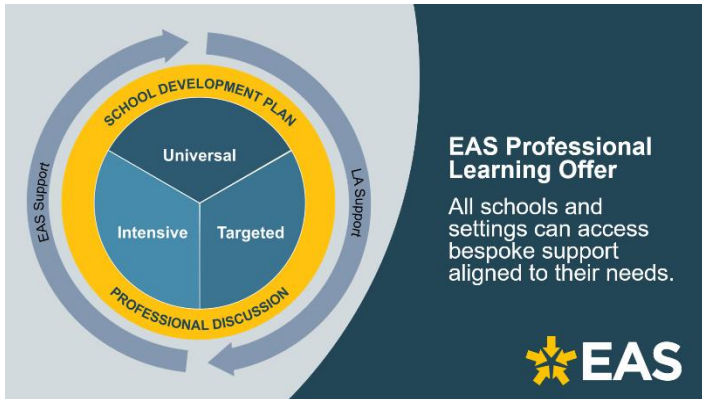
Local authorities and EAS will participate in a professional discussion with schools regarding their priorities for improvement and the progress the school is making towards them.

This process is cyclical and supports schools to determine and / or review their priorities in line with their self-evaluation processes.

The discussion also helps to determine the ongoing support needs of the school from each local authority and EAS and identify practice worth sharing.

All schools can access bespoke support aligned to their needs and priorities within their School Development Plan (SDP) which can be appropriately designed, co-constructed and facilitated in a flexible way.

4. Delivery approach: Universal, Targeted and Intensive

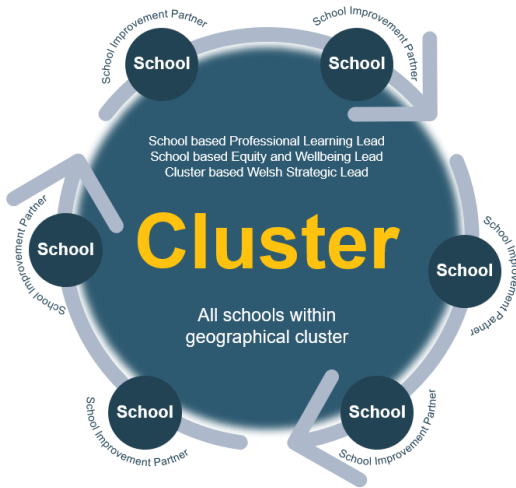


Universal Offer: All schools have access to a universal offer of support from their SIP (School Improvement Partner) and wider teams, focused on the school development plan. Schools have access to a wide range of professional learning opportunities and professional networks across a range of areas to include school leadership, support for teaching and learning and support for wellbeing. This also includes access to support from Professional Learning (PL) and Learning Network Schools (LNS). It is for schools to determine the most appropriate parts of the universal offer that most appropriately meet their needs.

Targeted Offer: This is in addition to the universal offer which is tailored and designed specifically to individual school or cluster needs. This can be brokered through the SIP and could come from the EAS and /or the local authority.

Intensive Offer: This is tailored, ongoing support for a school on an individual basis, with a focus on leadership and improving the quality of teaching and learning. This is coordinated wraparound support, usually provided by a Learning Network School, School to School model and / or intensive support from wider teams. This offer will be differentiated according to need and will usually be over a sustained period. Support will be reduced when improvement is sustained and embedded.

Team Around the Cluster



- Principal School Improvement Partner Cluster Link
- Curriculum Partner / Professional Learning Partner Link
- Governor Support Link



Team Around the Cluster:

In line with our vision to support collaboration and innovation, we will enhance our work with clusters of schools and align our resources accordingly. This will further support building capacity to more effectively support the progress that learners make.

5. Self-Evaluation: Progress towards current EAS Business Plan 2022-2025

EAS Business Plan 2022 - 2023: Evaluation and Impact Report (Quarter 4: May 2023) – this will be added in the final version of the new plan.

6. EAS Business Plan: Success Criteria 2023-2024

Welsh Government have set out 8 contributory factors to support schools to navigate the changing education landscape. These factors describe the key attributes that schools that are successfully realising the curriculum will possess. These describe the factors that support reform and which, where absent, are likely to act as barriers to success. The factors cover learner progress and the curriculum itself, as well as wider processes and priorities. The factors are captured below and are interwoven into our priorities for 2023-2024.

1. Enabling all learners, and in particular those from disadvantaged backgrounds, to progress along their own learning pathway and raise their aspirations to achieve their full potential; allied to a range of assessment approaches to understand and support this progress.
2. Co-constructing a curriculum, in line with the Curriculum for Wales Framework, which promotes a broad range of knowledge, skills and experiences (including social and interactional experiences) with a clear understanding of why these matter.
3. Ensuring the school environment supports learners' and practitioners' well-being.
4. Supporting practitioners' understanding of what works in curriculum design by investing in the enquiry and pedagogic skills of all staff.
5. Enabling ambitious professional learning for all practitioners in a school dedicated to being a learning organisation.
6. Embedding reflection, self-evaluation and improvement within schools, with good school leadership as a pre-condition for that.
7. Being at the heart of their communities - building better relationships between schools and families, communities and employers, to support and promote educational achievement and excellent employment, next steps education and training.
8. Listening to children and young people as they engage with their learning and supporting them in achieving their aspirations.

As factors that contribute to curriculum realisation, they should inform schools' understanding about what successful realisation of the Curriculum for Wales is likely to involve, as well as being an important reference for schools when evaluating their own curriculum realisation and deciding where and how they need to improve. They are not designed to be an exhaustive checklist for schools. They do however offer a consistent framework for use across Wales.

The self-evaluation and improvement cycle is central in enabling schools to continually develop and improve their practice: to give all learners the best possible learning experiences and outcomes, whatever their background or circumstance, and in order to achieve high standards and aspirations for all. Welsh Government have co-constructed the National Resource:

Evaluation and Improvement to support schools in undertaking robust, evidence-based self-evaluation. Within the School Improvement guidance, Welsh Government recognise the new national priorities which schools must have regard to when setting their improvement priorities which are:

- Improving pupils' progression by ensuring their learning is supported by a range of knowledge, skills and experience;
- Reducing the impact of poverty on learners' progression and attainment.

As part of our work to develop a strong approach to evaluation, and in particular the evaluation of learning, the EAS has developed a guide to help identify the wide range of evidence available for review and analysis. This builds on the work to look at the intent, implementation and impact of our interventions. It will support both School Improvement Partners and schools to consider how best to respond to the WG guidance quoted above. In particular, how to build the enabling conditions around the Curriculum for Wales and define its impact through embedded and accurate reflection and self-evaluation. Our approach to evaluating learning will focus on progress, attainment, wellbeing, social capital and equity and fairness.

7. EAS Business Plan: Activity 2023-2024

This section details the activities that will take place during 2023-2024. Each section has a set of success criteria which contributes to the overarching vision that we have for 2025. The support across each area is interrelated and should not be viewed in isolation, this section will be accompanied by a detailed plan that links to accountability arrangements, timescales and resources.

Priority 1: School Improvement

Priority 2: Leadership and Teaching

Priority 3: Curriculum for Wales

Priority 4: Health Wellbeing and Equity

Priority 5: School Governance

Priority 6: EAS Organisational Foundations

Priority 1: School Improvement: Provide bespoke support to local authorities, schools and educational settings (PRUs and Non-Maintained Nursery settings) that promotes peer collaboration and cluster working through a high support, high challenge model that fosters the development of an effective learning organisation.

Success Criteria	LA Partnership Working
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Schools and educational settings accessing the universal, targeted or intensive offer, receive timely support aligned to their improvement priorities and demonstrate progress overtime. 2. Self-evaluation activity identifies areas of strength and bespoke support needs for all schools and educational settings enabling the EAS and local authorities to know schools and educational settings well. 3. All schools and educational settings make progress against their inspection recommendations and identified improvement priorities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage in sessions to review, refine and co-construct regional processes and policies. • Share relevant and appropriate information that supports a holistic view of each school in a timely and systematic way. • Organise Professional Discussions in line with the regional guidance. • Identify schools who require a Team Around the School (TAS) approach in line with the regional guidance. • Document local authority support within the Support Plan and Notes of Activity as appropriate. • Support schools and settings with additional support which is outside the scope of the EAS role and responsibilities. • In partnership with the EAS, review the capacity of Headteachers to work as SIPs to support a self improving system.

Assumptions: Processes that should be in place

- All schools and educational settings engage in professional discussions that enable the sharing of effective practice.
- All schools and educational settings have a bespoke support plan aligned to their identified priorities for improvement which is shared with the governing body on an annual basis.
- All schools and educational settings engage in regular supported self-evaluation activity.
- There are robust performance management arrangements in place for Headteachers.
- Estyn reports are co-constructed with local authorities for schools in statutory categories.
- Monthly partnership meetings are held with local authorities to meet accountability arrangements.
- Where appropriate, leaders, schools and educational settings are encouraged to work collaboratively within and beyond their own cluster to support improvement and develop system leadership.

Priority 2: Leadership and Teaching: Provide professional learning and support for the continuous development and growth of leadership and teaching across the entire workforce (Leaders, teachers and teaching assistants), to enable the development of an effective learning organisation.

Success Criteria	LA Partnership Working
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The workforce is supported by a professional learning offer and networking opportunities which promotes continuous learning opportunities and contributes to improvements in teaching and leadership. 2. Schools and educational settings requiring targeted or intensive support, receive timely and appropriate professional learning which leads to improvements in teaching and leadership. 3. Practitioners who access agile leadership and/or coaching and mentoring professional learning develop improved approaches within their own schools and settings. 4. Effective partnership working reduces the impact of potential recruitment and retention challenges. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage leaders to engage in regional processes to strengthen accurate self-evaluation and improvement planning and in the regional Celebrate, Share, Support and Refine (CSSR) processes. • Promote the regional teaching and learning offer for all practitioners (Leaders, teachers and teaching assistants). • Provide access to appropriate and relevant data about trends in staffing, particularly recruitment and retention. • Promote the regional Talent Management Approach for all schools and encourage schools, to engage in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) placements, where capacity allows. • Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESP) address challenges in recruitment and retention. • Support the work of professional learning and learning network schools. Identify schools that demonstrate any barriers to engagement in the regional professional learning offer. • Encourage appropriate schools to engage in ITE partnership across Wales. • Engage in the endorsement of candidates that meet the Aspiring Headteacher and preparation for National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) threshold.

Assumptions: Processes that should be in place

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All schools access valuable professional learning aligned to their own school priorities. • A sustainable supply of high-quality ITE placements are provided. • All schools have robust statutory induction support for newly qualified teachers (NQTs). • Higher Level Teaching Assistant assessment (HLTA) Status and NPQH assessment processes meet requirements. • All Curriculum for Wales professional learning schools and learning network schools adhere to their annual workplan on behalf of the EAS. • Where appropriate, leaders, schools and educational settings are encouraged to work collaboratively within and beyond their own cluster to support improvement and develop system leadership.

Priority 3: Curriculum for Wales: Provide professional learning and support for schools and educational settings (PRUs and Non-Maintained Nursery Settings) to realise Curriculum for Wales (CfW) and to enable them to become effective learning organisations within and beyond clusters.

Success Criteria	LA Partnership Working
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The workforce is supported by a professional learning offer and networking opportunities for curriculum for Wales that supports and contributes to improvements in curriculum design, subject disciplines, teaching, skills development and learning. 2. All schools and educational settings have appropriate arrangements in place to review and evaluate their curriculum provision and its impact on learner progress. 3. Schools and educational settings requiring targeted or intensive support for curriculum implementation, receive timely and appropriate professional learning that enhances provision and learning. 4. The provision for Welsh and bilingualism is developing both strategically and operationally in all English medium schools from the current position. 5. Work in clusters is benefiting learners, teachers and the wider system as collaboration and sharing enhances school's own improvement priorities in relation to the developments in curriculum provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine where slow progress is undermining schools' ability to deliver the agreed syllabus as part of curriculum for Wales. • Work collaboratively to determine where there may be risks to Welsh in Education delivery targets. • Promote and support the regional and national professional learning offer for curriculum for Wales. • Support the Religion and Values Education (RVE) partner to ensure effective operation of local Standing Advisory Councils for Religion, Values and Ethics (SACs). Identify where mandatory aspects and the agreed syllabus are not yet fully embedded. • Work collaboratively to review the work of schools and educational settings undertaking the role of learning network schools, and their capacity to support a school improving system.

Assumptions: Processes that should be in place

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All schools and educational settings have processes in place to ensure that the mandatory aspects of the curriculum for Wales framework support curriculum provision. • All schools and educational settings follow the agreed syllabus to ensure that the mandatory requirements of RVE and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) are met and support curriculum provision. • Provision for Welsh enables a progressive pathway to qualifications in Welsh / through the medium of Welsh, including post 16, and opportunities for learners to use Welsh in different contexts in schools and educational settings (formal and informal). • All Curriculum for Wales professional learning schools and learning network schools adhere to their annual workplan on behalf of the EAS. • Where appropriate, leaders, schools and educational settings are encouraged to work collaboratively within and beyond their own cluster to support improvement and system leadership.
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Priority 4: Health Wellbeing and Equity: Provide professional learning and support for health, wellbeing and equity to improve the outcomes of vulnerable and disadvantaged learners supporting the development of effective learning organisations.

Success Criteria	LA Partnership Working
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All schools and educational settings have an appropriate vision and approach to health, wellbeing and equity. This integrated and responsive approach is reflected in each school's SDP and teaching and learning strategies. 2. Schools and educational settings requiring targeted or intensive support, receive timely and appropriate professional learning in relation to Health, Wellbeing and Equity that supports improvement in the educational attainment and wellbeing outcomes of vulnerable and disadvantaged learners. 3. Professional learning, support and guidance assists schools to develop systems and processes to reduce the impact of poverty on vulnerable and disadvantaged learners. 4. Schools' own evaluations of provision, teaching and learning for vulnerable and disadvantaged learners are appropriately informed by the professional learning provided. As a result, whole school strategic interventions are responding to learner needs and are improving attitudes to learning and leading to better progress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the EAS and local authority services are joined up to support the regional provision for Health, Wellbeing and Equity. • Support the review and impact of the use of Pupil Development Grant (PDG). • Identify schools and educational settings who require additional support and share relevant information. • Promote and support the regional and national professional learning offer. • Support the EAS in keeping under review learning network school capacity to support the wider system sharing information where relevant.

Assumptions: Processes that should be in place

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are clear roles and responsibilities between the EAS and each local authority for the provision of support for Health, Wellbeing and Equity so that schools and educational settings are clear about where to access support. • All schools and educational settings comply with the policy directive to prioritise health and wellbeing and community focussed schools in their SDPs. • All schools and educational settings comply with PDG grant terms and condition requirements. • All Curriculum for Wales professional learning and learning network schools adhere to their annual workplan on behalf of the EAS. • Where appropriate, leaders, schools and educational settings are encouraged to work collaboratively within and beyond their own cluster to support improvement and system leadership.

Priority 5: School Governance: Provide a broad range of professional learning, support, advice and guidance, that has a positive impact on developing governance and its role in the development of schools as effective learning organisations.

Success Criteria	LA Partnership Working
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Professional Learning (PL) and networking enables governors to impact positively on school leadership and governance. 2. Governing Bodies accurately evaluate the impact of their work on the development of the school, using the self-evaluation tool to identify their own development needs. 3. Where schools require targeted or intensive support, the Governing Body is supported to understand both the implications and the support available, so that they can demonstrate a positive impact on leadership. 4. Governing Bodies knowledge and understanding of their school is improved through the provision of the SIP Annual Report detailing the support that is being provided to the school. 5. When required, Chairs of Governors engage with advice and support from the Regional Specialist HR service, through the school improvement team, so that they are able to support the development of school leadership. 6. The Service Level Agreement provides a comprehensive range of support services to support governing bodies in meeting their core responsibilities and statutory requirements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide local authority specific professional learning for governors. • Communicate support needs for specific governing bodies, to help target professional learning and support. • Encourage governing bodies to engage with the self-evaluation process. • Provide appropriate local authority input into statutory processes as required. • Consider the suitability of any applications for local authority governors, through usual governor appointment processes. • Take action to support recruitment or amend arrangements in governing bodies, where required. • Take action to support the recruitment of governors, amending arrangements in governing bodies, where required. • Ensure that they are satisfied, as per Welsh Government Guidance, that all schools have an adequate complaints procedure.

Assumptions: Processes that should be in place

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All newly appointed governors attend mandatory training within the stipulated timescales and are supported by a mentor from within the governing body. Non-compliance is reported to the relevant chair of governors and LA. • Where a Governing Body has more than three vacancies for over a term, does not hold three meetings in a year, or does not hold an Annual General Meeting the chair of governors, headteacher and LA are informed. • All governing bodies have an 'adequate complaints procedure that is publicised' based on revised Welsh Government Guidance (December 2022).
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Priority 6: EAS Organisational Foundations: Provide a lean, efficient organisational infrastructure which delivers on our agreed priorities to support all schools and educational settings to be thriving, learning organisations.

Success Criteria	LA Partnership Working
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The financial and operational delivery model enables effective delivery of the regional school improvement model. 2. A balanced year end budget is achieved through effective financial management. 3. Timely progress is made towards the Business Plan priorities demonstrating impact and value for money. 4. Processes for self-evaluation and impact capture are used well to inform strengths and areas for improvement. 5. Processes for performance management and professional learning enable a skilled and effective workforce. 6. Effective systems enable the collation of a range of information on schools and educational settings to be used to support improvement. 7. Effective partnership working including national and cross regional work contributes to system wide improvement in Wales and beyond. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local authorities are committed to financing and supporting a sustainable regional model for school improvement. • Support effective governance arrangements through engagement and attendance. • Engage in consultation and self-evaluation processes, as appropriate.

Assumptions: Processes that should be in place

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The EAS is an agile and responsive organisation providing bespoke and flexible support to local authorities. • The EAS values and develops transparent and productive relationships with all partners. • The EAS regular reviews all systems and processes to ensure they consider workload implications. • A robust governance model is in operation with optimal attendance and engagement. • The EAS complies with all legal requirements as an employer and as a company. • The EAS engages in a broad range of internal and external audits that support improvement.

8. EAS Business Plan: LA Partnership Working 2023-2024 (draft and for further discussion)

LA Partnership Working in Blaenau Gwent 2023-2024

LA Priorities and Success Criteria	EAS targeted actions agreed with LA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximise learning and skills for all to create a prosperous, thriving, resilient Blaenau Gwent. Respond to the nature and climate crisis and enable connected communities, An ambitious and innovative council delivering quality services at the right time and in the right place, Empowering and supporting communities to be safe, independent and resilient. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support for becoming a Raising the Achievement of Disadvantaged Youngsters (RADY) local authority. CSSR approach to be undertaken in identified schools, to establish specific aspects for support. To include all schools with Special Needs Resource Bases. LA officers to join the CSSR process in schools with Special Needs Resource Bases. LA officers to join supported self-evaluation activity in identified schools causing concern.

LA Estyn Recommendations
<p>November 2022:</p> <p>R1 Improve the corporate leadership of education services.</p> <p>R2 Improve the quality of self-evaluation, strategic planning and performance management.</p> <p>R3 Accelerate improvements in provision for secondary age pupils in schools causing concern.</p>

LA Education Strategy Priorities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. Enhancing the performance culture for Education and Leisure that delivers better educational outcomes and improved value for money.

LA Themes

Autumn 2023	Spring 2024	Summer 2024
How effectively do schools plan for the teaching of reading that secures good pupil progress?	How effectively do schools plan for the teaching of reading that secures good pupil progress?	How effectively do schools plan for teaching that secures good progress for vulnerable learners?

Reporting impact: EAS Stats and Stories

Autumn 2023	Spring 2024	Summer 2024
What arrangements are schools making to assess and monitor pupil progress and how effectively is this used to plan for improvements in provision and progress?	How effectively do schools plan for the teaching of reading that secures good pupil progress?	How effectively do schools plan for the teaching of reading that secures good pupil progress?