

Committee: **Governance and Audit Committee**
Date of meeting: **26th April 2023**
Report Subject: **Blaenau Gwent Response to Estyn Local Government Education Services (LGES) Inspection**
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr. Sue Edmunds, Cabinet Member People and Education**
Report Submitted by: **Luisa Munro-Morris, Head of School Improvement and Inclusion**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
05.04.23	06/04/23			26/04/23	28/04/23	03.05.23		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 For Governance and Audit Committee to be assured that the Education Directorate's response to the Estyn Local Government Education Services (LGES) Inspection responds appropriately to the recommendations and is in line with Council's Governance arrangements.

The full report is attached as Appendix 1.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The provision of Education is regulated under the Estyn Local Government Education Services (LGES) framework. The Local Authority was inspected between 28th November and 2nd December and the report was published February 2023. The outcome of the Inspection is positive overall, progress since the last inspection has been made and there is no requirement for follow-up activity. The inspectorate identified 3 recommendations for improvement, and the local authority will use these recommendations to update its improvement plans.

- 2.2 The recommendations are:

- R1.** Improve the corporate leadership of education services;
- R2.** Improve the quality of self-evaluation, strategic planning and performance management; and,
- R3.** Accelerate improvements in provision for secondary age pupils in schools causing concern.

- 2.3 In addition to the three recommendations, key areas for improvement have been identified within the body of the Estyn Report. These will be addressed alongside the 3 recommendations.

- 2.4 This report is the first update reporting on progress against the 3 recommendations to Members.

2.5 **Local Authority Link Inspection Visits**

Estyn have confirmed that there is no requirement for the LA to prepare a Post Inspection Action plan following the inspection. Instead, as part of the termly Local Authority Link Inspection Visits (LALI), the LA will be required to provide evidence to the inspectorate that shows improvements are being made both corporately and operationally in relation to the 3 recommendations.

2.6 The first LALI visit post inspection took place on 16th March, 2023. A range of evidence was presented to demonstrate progress towards the 3 recommendations.

2.7 **Business Planning**

The Education Directorate has revised its business plan (improvement plan) to incorporate the 3 recommendations at both a strategic and an operational level. Progress on relevant actions within the business plan will be reviewed on a quarterly basis, in line with other actions.

2.8 **Self-evaluation Report**

Estyn identified in their report that overall the quality of self-evaluation is not strong enough. In response to this, the Education Directorate have revised the format of the self-evaluation report. The report is now structured so that it reports directly on each of the 5 corporate school improvement priorities. There is a clear focus on progress against the priority, impact and next steps. There is also a section to identify and evidence progress against the 3 recommendations (Appendix 2). Progress has been made on identifying suitable data to use as evidence and this will be reported on in the next update.

2.9 **Action Plans**

Half-termly action planning sessions, which commenced in the Spring term, are in place with key stakeholders from across the LA. The aim of these sessions is to create action plans to address the recommendations and the key areas for improvement from within the report. An initial action plan has been created, which includes measurable success criteria and identifies responsible persons for each action (Appendix 3). The next step is to identify timeframes for each of the actions.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 The report has been considered by Education's DMT and CLT.

3.2 **Option 1**

Governance and Audit Committee is assured that the action plan in response to Estyn's recommendations and the structure of the revised Self-evaluation Report will appropriately respond to the Estyn Recommendations.

3.3 **Option 2**

Governance and Audit Committee provide amendment on the action plan and or Self-evaluation report for consideration by the Education Directorate.

4. **Evidence of how this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**
- 4.1 It is a statutory responsibility of the Corporate Director of Education to assess the effectiveness of the delivery of Education and regular monitoring reports will be produced, in line with the Scrutiny and Cabinet Forward Work Programmes.
5. **Implications Against Each Option**
- 5.1 **Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)**

There are no direct financial considerations associated with this report, however, it is pleasing to note the findings from the Inspectorate on resource management. There was acknowledgement that the LA has a track record of spending within its education budget in recent years, with relatively small underspends for the past three years against the overall education budget. The financial outlook, however, for the public sector will be challenging over the period of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and close financial management will be essential to achieve value for money.
- 5.2 **Risk including Mitigating Actions**

There is one corporate risk for the Education service in the Corporate Risk Register relating to the 2 Schools Causing Concern. Education also maintains a Directorate Risk Register, which is aligned to both service level and corporate risks. One of the Estyn recommendations relates to the slow pace of change in one of these schools causing concern. The risk register is reviewed as part of the business planning process and included within the performance reporting for the service. The inspection findings are to be included in the risk registers.
- 5.3 **Legal**

There are no legal requirements as part of this report, however, there is a requirement to respond to the Estyn recommendations within three months of receiving the letter.
- 5.4 **Human Resources**

There are no direct implications for staff relating to this report.
6. **Supporting Evidence**
- 6.1 The detailed inspection findings are included within Appendix 1. The Education Directorate is working together with key stakeholders to deliver 'Better Schools, Better Citizens and Better Communities – all through a child and young person-centred approach'. The Education Directorate are working with corporate colleagues and key partners to ensure that the vision and strategic aims for education are fully understood across the board.
- 6.2 **Expected outcome for the public**

The Estyn report was published early in February and the reporting of findings provides the public with the opportunity to view progress of the LA/ Education Directorate and partners to ensure public accountability for our citizens.

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

The LA has shared the inspection findings with stakeholders, including Headteachers and partners. Pupil voice is a key area for the Education Directorate and examples of this are included within the inspection findings, it should also be noted that a member of the Youth Forum contributes to the work the People Scrutiny Committee.

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

The report enables the Education Directorate to plan as resourcing, risk and performance is continuously reported. The Estyn findings provide a baseline of where the services are currently placed, and most importantly, where we need to be in the future.

6.5 **Preventative focus**

The work undertaken by the Education Directorate promotes a preventative approach to practice through early identification and intervention. The respective teams have an active rather than re-active approach to service planning and can also help with planning resources and ensuring value for money services are delivered.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

Work will be undertaken across the Education Directorate alongside working with the EAS and schools.

6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***

The whole Education Directorate as well as other key service areas, such as Governance and Partnerships, and the Regeneration and Community Services Directorate will be involved in supporting education across the borough.

6.8 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***

There are no direct implications in relation to decarbonisation as part of this report, however, school buildings and adaptations consider how to reduce carbon emissions.

6.9 ***Integrated Impact Assessment (IAA)***

As this is not a decision-making report an IAA is not required, however, Education work to support all those with protected characteristics.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 The performance of the Education Directorate is monitored via through the democratic process via various reporting mechanisms including the Finance and Performance Report, the Assessment of Performance and various performance monitoring reports.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- [Appendix 1 – Blaenau Gwent LGES Inspection](#)
- [Appendix 2 – Draft revised SER](#)
- [Appendix 3 – Action plan](#)