

# Education & Leisure Services

## Annual Performance Report



April 2022-March 2023

**'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'**

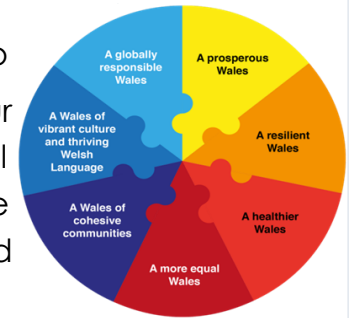
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# Foreword

**Why this is important** - Improving the quality and provision of teaching and learning is vitally important to ensure we are achieving ambitious outcomes for all children and young people. We will continue to invest in our education services and present service activity which highlights how we are contributing to the Council's overall aim of delivering all seven national well-being goals. These goals are set out within The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 which is legislation aiming to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The vision of this legislation is expressed in the seven National well-being goals.



The Act also puts a duty on public bodies to apply the **sustainable development principles** which states they 'must meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. The sustainable development principle is made up of the following five ways of working, pictured below:



**Integration**



**Collaboration**



**Involvement**



**Long Term**



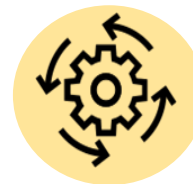
**Prevention**

Throughout this report some areas of performance that meet these ways of working are demonstrated by the above images.

**The Purpose of this report** - To present service activity for the period, detailing achievements and challenges aligned to the priority areas identified in the Corporate Plan 2022/27, which are to :



**Maximise learning and skills for all to create a prosperous, thriving, resilient Blaenau Gwent**



**An ambitious and innovative council delivering quality services at the right time and in the right place**



**Respond to the nature and climate crisis and enable connected communities**

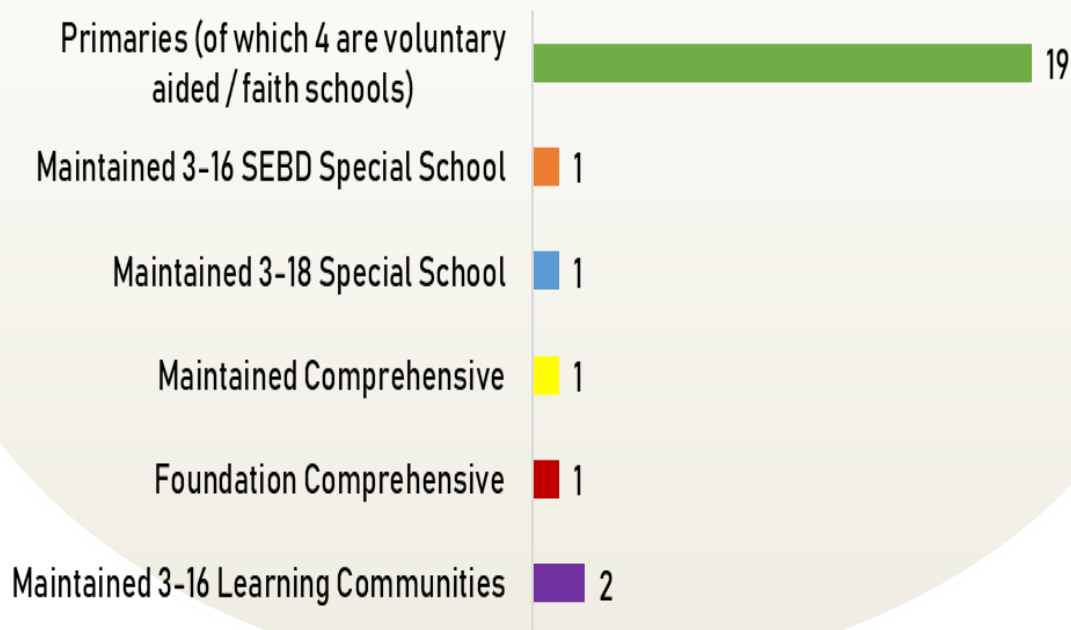


**Empowering and supporting communities to be safe, independent and resilient**

## The Shape of Our Place -

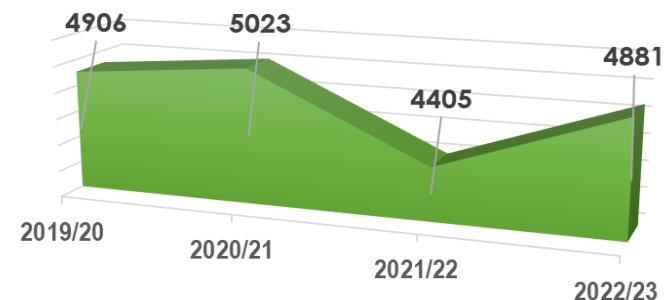
Blaenau Gwent is a place of heritage and dramatic change, with a sense of its past but its eyes firmly on the future. The area is relatively small geographically, being at most 15 miles north to south, and 8 miles east to west. Blaenau Gwent is defined physically by high hillsides dividing the three 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, it is a largely rural area. Wherever you are, beautiful countryside is never far away.

Blaenau Gwent has 25 schools across 31 school sites and There are currently circa 9,000+ pupils on roll across all Blaenau Gwent schools.

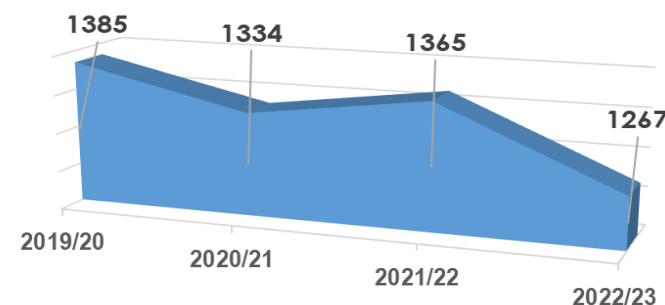


Number of pupils on roll in each categorisation of school. Note: 2022/23 figures are as at 27<sup>th</sup> January 2023

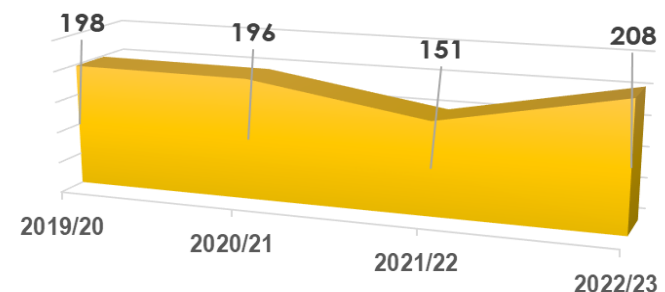
### Number of Pupils on roll in Primary Schools



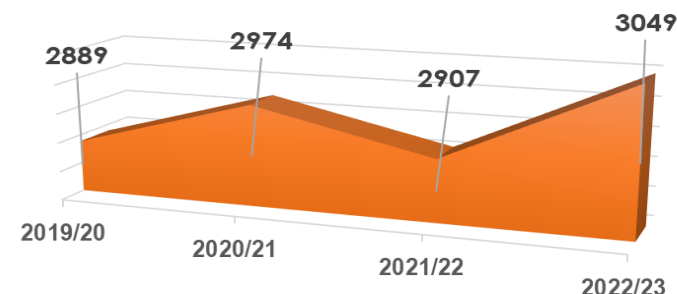
### Number of Pupils on roll in Secondary



### Number of Pupils on roll in Special Schools



### Number of Pupils on roll in Middle School





## The Shape of Our Place (continued)-

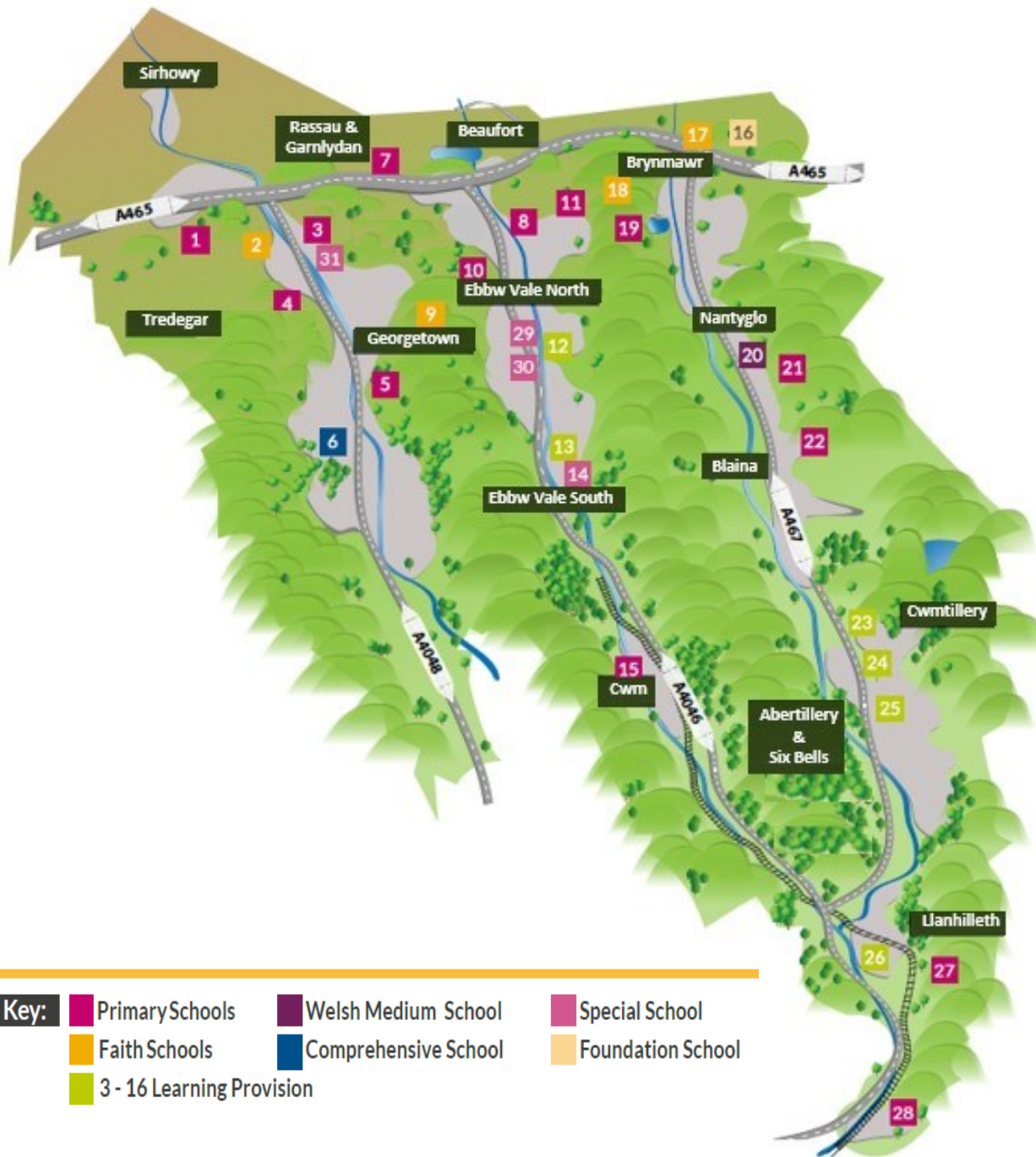
The Education Directorate provides services to support children and young people's educational learning opportunities whilst working collaboratively with our schools and the Aneurin Leisure and Awen Trust in a Council client function role. The Education Directorate has developed a new purpose statement, which is to deliver '**Better Schools, Better Citizens and Better Communities**'. The Education Workforce Plan 2021-26 contributes to the purpose by prioritising key strategic and operational activity to support our workforce at all levels.

The plan covers the Directorate's three main aspects of core service delivery, namely:

- School Improvement and Inclusion;
- Education Transformation and Business Change; and,
- Young People and Partnerships.

And includes a workforce Profile for the Directorate.

# Location of Schools



Key:	Primary Schools	Welsh Medium School	Special School
	Faith Schools	Comprehensive School	Foundation School
	3-16 Learning Provision		

- 1 Brynbach Primary School
- 2 St Joseph's RC School
- 3 Glanhowy Primary School
- 4 Deighton Primary School
- 5 Georgetown Primary School
- 6 Tredegar Comprehensive School
- 7 Rhos y Fedwen Primary School
- 8 Glyncoed Primary School
- 9 All Saint's RC School
- 10 Willowtown Primary School
- 11 Beaufort Hill Primary School
- 12 Ebbw Fawr Learning Community Secondary Phase
- 13 Ebbw Fawr Learning Community Primary Phase
- 14 Pen Y Cwm Special School
- 15 Cwm Primary School
- 16 Brynmawr Foundation School
- 17 St Mary's Church in Wales School
- 18 St Mary's Roman Catholic School
- 19 Blaenycwm Primary School
- 20 Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg
- 21 Coed y Garn Primary School
- 22 Ystruth Primary School
- 23 Abertillery Learning Community - Roseheyworth Road Campus
- 24 Abertillery Learning Community - Secondary Campus
- 25 Abertillery Learning Community - Tillery Street Campus
- 26 Abertillery Learning Community - Six Bells Campus
- 27 St Illtyds Primary School
- 28 Sofrydd Primary School
- 29 River Centre 3-16 Learning Community - Secondary Campus
- 30 River Centre 3-16 Learning Community - Primary Campus
- 31 River Centre 3-16 Learning Community - House

## Director's overview and reflections on 2022/23.

### 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 (Strategic Aims) - under review

- 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 (Business Plan) – 5 Priorities**, supporting delivery of the Corporate priority areas identified in the Corporate Plan 2022/27 (detailed on page 3)

- **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**.

### Reflections on 2022/23

This report demonstrates how the Education Directorate contributes to the team (the council as a whole) aim of delivering our corporate priorities.



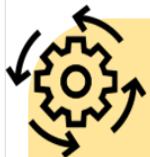
## Director's overview & reflections on 2022/23 (continued)

Throughout the body of the report you will find examples of performance, both positive achievements and areas that we continue to focus on improving. We recognise that even the achievements are not yet completed but remain areas for progress to be maintained and improved upon where possible.

You will find some examples of these performance outcomes below and how they are supporting delivery of our corporate objectives



As a council we are looking to '**Maximise learning and skills for all to create a prosperous, thriving, resilient Blaenau Gwent**'. To support this, the Education Directorate aim to ensure that all children and young people are given the best start in life, enabling them to grow into fruitful adults living a healthy, fulfilling life whilst contributing to society and forming a valuable part of their community. We deliver this by ensuring higher levels of language acquisition and reading across the board, and overall enabling positive outcomes and attainment. We support children and young people to be in a good position to find skills and employment at the appropriate times and our NEET figures demonstrate our achievements in this area. The monitoring of school attendance and exclusion numbers is key to understand potential barriers to learning. This is one area that needs further work and something that we will be analysing in much greater depth. The number of eFSM are also increasing, again an area for further analysis and action. Our long term aim is to decrease the percentage of adults aged 16-24 with no qualifications and we are progressing well with achieving this reduction. We ensure that effective digital communication methods and systems are in place for both staff and pupils. Digital development will provide children and young people with opportunities to learn in these fast advancing digital times that we live in. As shown in the body of the report internal systems are being updated to move towards more online communication and ICT methods for both new school and existing school settings delivered through our Sustainable Communities for learning .



As a council we are looking to be '**an ambitious and innovative council delivering quality services at the right time and in the right place**'. To support this, the Education Directorate aim to deliver effective and efficient services within financial constraints. The Local Authority 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. The Education Directorate wants to drive forward the right leadership approaches, right staffing capacity, people with the right skills/capabilities and the right forward planning to prepare for the future needs of the service. DBS compliance sits at 100% for the Directorate which is extremely positive. The Directorate sickness absence levels have been reported as 7.10 days per Full Time Equivalent (FTE) which has come well under the Local Authority Corporate target of 10 days per FTE. It is recognised that one of the main strategic risks identified for the directorate is dependency on external funding to support key services and the workforce, such as Welsh Government Additional Learning Needs Reform funding, European Social Funding legacy work and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme.

## Director's overview and reflections on 2022/23 (continued)



As a council we are looking to '**empower and support communities to be safe, independent and resilient**'. To deliver this, the Education Directorate support children and young people's educational learning opportunities whilst working collaboratively with the Aneurin Leisure and Awen Trust in a Council client function role, with an aim to ensure that all children and young peoples well-being and educational needs are catered for. The 2023 Estyn report of the Local Authority confirms that "Officers and elected members are committed to safeguarding young people in their local authority and there is an appropriate safeguarding culture within the local authority where all officers and elected members receive suitable safeguarding training. The way in which education and children's services work together has contributed well to improving multi-agency working and the support schools receive to manage the needs of pupils and their families more effectively." In school counselling services and youth support services are in place and working well. Our dedicated staff and the implementation of integrated systems and processes assist in preparing our children and young people for the world as safe, independent and resilient members of society.



As a council we are looking to '**Respond to the nature and climate crisis and enable connected communities**'. To support this, the Education Directorate aim to ensure that decarbonisation measures are at the forefront of our future planning and teaching. The environment and biodiversity considerations form the basis of all new school buildings and existing school upgrades and we encourage nature friendly management on school grounds. Effective partnership working enables us to provide advice and guidance to support our children and young people around biodiversity, decarbonisation, equalities, diversity and inclusion. These partnerships with schools and the Children's Grand Council are very effective and not only inform but support our children and young people to have a voice. We are and will continue to deliver effective sustainable communities for learning which are environmentally friendly and support the delivery of our educated young people who will in the future form our connected communities.



**Lynn Phillips**  
**Director of**  
**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 Internal Planning framework to the right demonstrates how reporting and monitoring works throughout the Council to create this 'golden thread'.

### Progress against actions

This report is broken down into the Directorate priority areas previously detailed in the 'Director's Overview' on page 7.

The following overview pages and case studies detail our performance for the period along with some associated achievements and challenges aligned to supporting delivery of the corporate priority areas identified in the Corporate Plan 2022/27,

### Planning Framework

Corporate	<p><b>Well-being Plan</b> Partnership plan for Blaenau Gwent reported to Partnership Scrutiny Committee</p>
Corporate	<p><b>The Council's Corporate Plan</b> These are the priorities of the Council and form its business plan – reported to Corporate Overview and Performance Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet</p>
Corporate	<p><b>Finance and Performance Report</b> Councils performance monitoring report (supported by the information in this report) reported to Corporate Overview and Performance Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet</p>
Directorate	<p><b>Education Six Monthly and Annual Performance Report</b> Report of the Director of Education reported to People Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet and Council</p>
Director, Head of Service & Team Manager	<p><b>Business Planning and Self-Evaluation</b> Updated quarterly includes – priorities, actions, risk, projects, PI's and FEP monitoring</p>
Individuals	<p><b>Performance Coaching</b> Individuals have monthly and annual coaching using the business plans</p>



## Inspection of Blaenau Gwent Local Government Education Service

At the end of 2022, Blaenau Gwent Council was subject to an Estyn inspection with the three inspection areas being :-

- 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

# Inspection of Blaenau Gwent Local Government Education Service

Following the full inspection week, the Council received initial feedback and findings from the Inspection team (2nd December 2022). This was followed up by a draft and receipt of the final report, which included the inspectorate findings and that identified 3 recommendations for improvement. The full report also details the inspectorate's findings against the 4 local questions. The main findings, included:-

- The local authority has made good progress with its education services since it was last inspected around ten years ago as important areas for improvement have largely been addressed. Senior officers and elected members have a strong commitment to education, and this is reflected in the funding given to schools and education services.
- The local authority generally plans well to make sure that it has suitable education provision to meet the needs of every child and young person. Over the past decade, the local authority has successfully reduced surplus places in schools and improved the conditions of its school buildings. The local authority is suitably developing its Welsh-medium education provision. However, whilst there have been some positive developments in provision for pupils with additional learning needs, the quality of planning for future provision is variable.
- There are many strengths in the local authority's work to reduce the impact of deprivation on educational outcomes and its support for families in low-income households. There are also many strengths in the services to support children and young people's well-being and promote positive relationships.
- The authority has worked with its regional school improvement service to strengthen the challenge and support it provides to schools. This work has greater impact for children in non-maintained and primary age settings than for young people in secondary age settings. Provision for young people was too slow to improve in two schools placed in statutory categories.
- Despite strengths in education services, corporate leaders have not ensured that their vision and strategic aims for education are fully understood by other officers, elected members, school staff and external partners. Also, corporate leaders have not ensured that the corporate plan is supported by coherent delivery plans for education that include related actions and measurable success criteria. Overall, the quality of self-evaluation, planning for improvement, and performance management is not strong enough.

The inspectorate has identified 3 recommendations for improvement that the local authority will use to drive forward progress. These areas for development take account of shortcomings identified through the inspection process. The local authority's plans are being updated and the Education Improvement Plan (EIP) and Self-Evaluation Report (SER) being revised. Importantly, developmental work has already begun on addressing the recommendations that are outlined below:

- 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.

# Inspection of Blaenau Gwent Local Government Education Service

Blaenau Gwent Council has welcomed an Estyn report into its education services which shows that the authority has made good progress since its last inspection and that important areas for improvement have been addressed.

Estyn carried out their inspection over several days in late November/early December, and engaged with schools, children and young people, parents and other key stakeholders.

The final report recognised a strong commitment to education by senior officers and councillors; good planning to ensure the educational needs of all learners are met; the growth of Welsh medium education and, pleasingly, the council's work to support vulnerable learners and families in the community through its anti-poverty agenda and school support services.

There are areas that the inspectorate identified for improvement, including 3 recommendations. The Council is proactively responding to the report's findings, including ensuring the vision and aims for education are shared more widely across the authority; improving self-evaluation, improvement planning and performance management; and accelerating improvements in any schools causing concern.

## **Councillor Sue Edmunds, Blaenau Gwent Council's Cabinet Member for People & Education says:**

"We welcome Estyn's report into our Education services, which recognises the overall progress made and our continued commitment to providing the very best educational opportunities and well-being tools to enhance the life chances of our children and young people.

"We are working hard to continue improving the quality of our service and we are determined to move forward with our vision for "Better Schools; Better Citizens; and Better Communities.

"We acknowledge the recommendations made by the inspectorate on how we can further improve and look forward to building on the good work already started in these areas."



You can read the Estyn report in full [here](#).



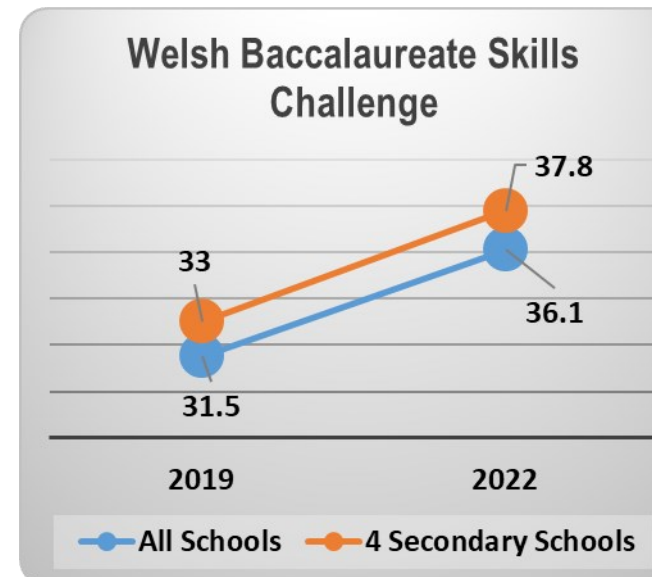
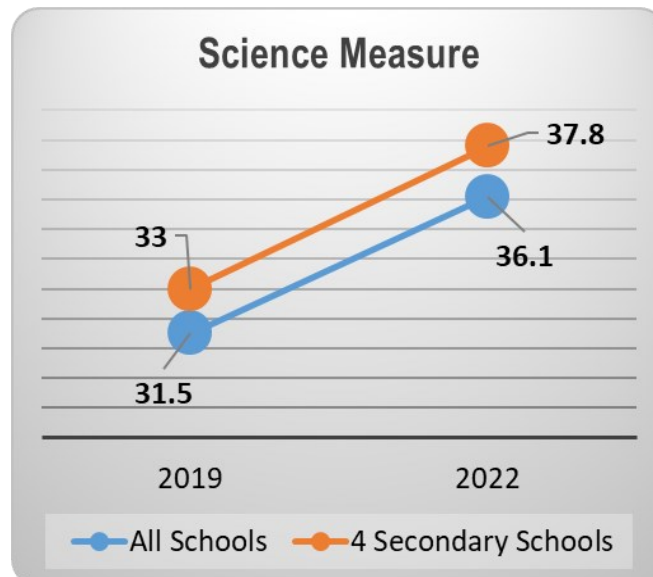
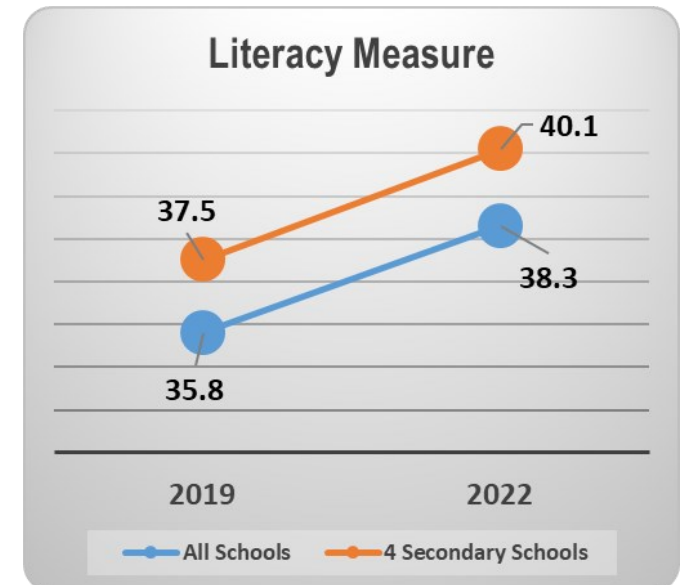
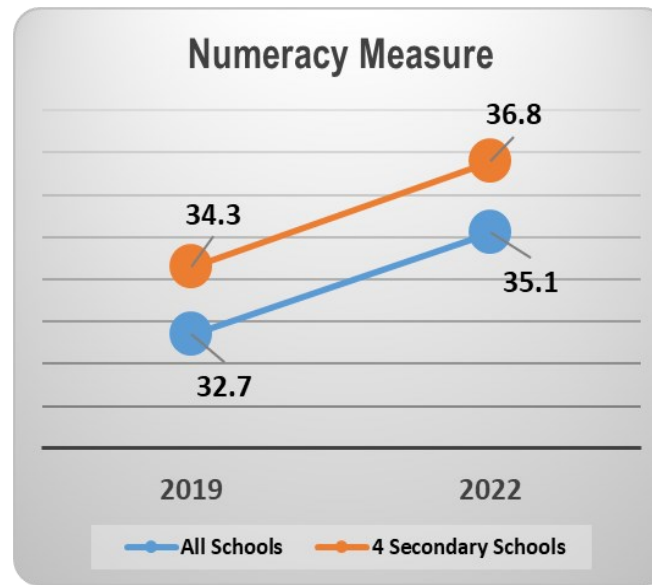
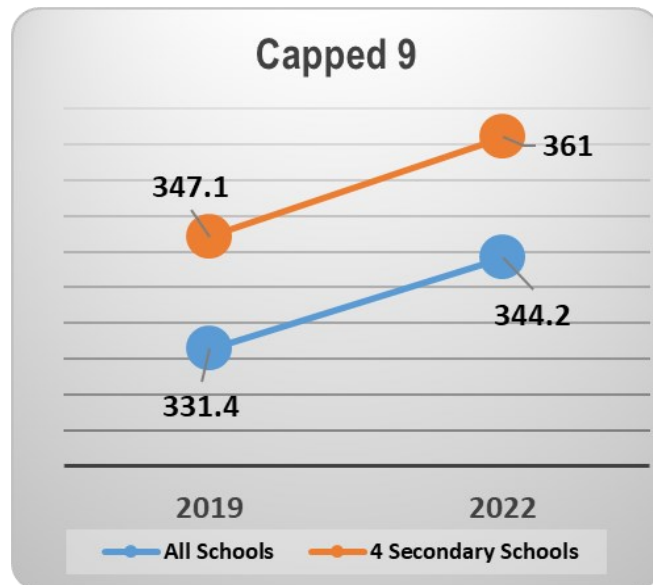




## Improve outcomes and well-being for pupils, particularly at KS4



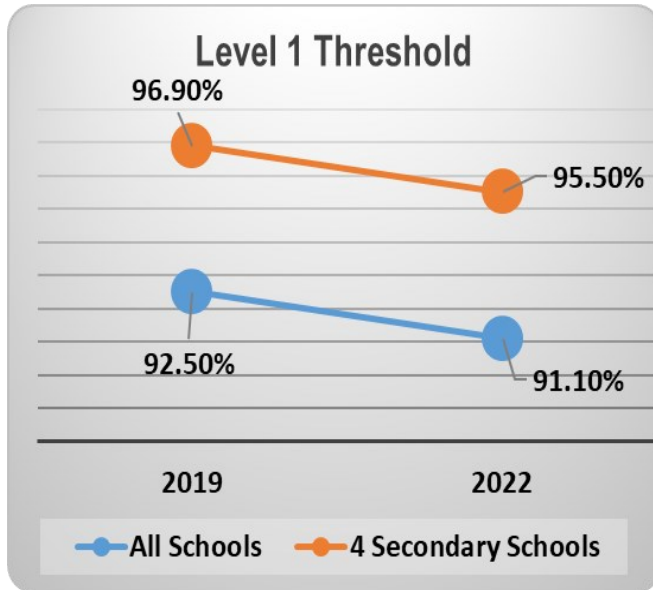
The **2022 KS4 results were positive** and in line with the School Development Plan targets set by the 4 secondary settings. There were improvements in 29 out of 32 key measures. Some examples are shown below :-  
( Note: only 2019 and 2022 comparison data shown due to routine data collection suspended / 2022 data included for self-evaluation purposes only)



**IMPROVED PERFORMANCE IN ALL 4 SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THESE KEY AREAS**

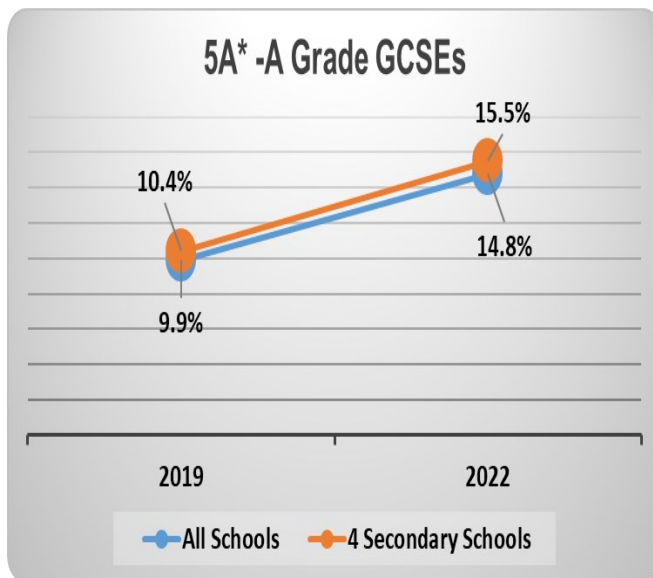


## Improve outcomes and well-being for pupils, particularly at KS4



Blaenau Gwent continue to deliver a number of services that offer support for young people aged 11-25 who at risk of becoming or are currently not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). 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.**



**Level 2 inclusive is Blaenau Gwent's best performance.**



**Going forward we will monitor and ensure the pace of change in school's causing concern is improved.**

We have seen a **reduction** in **Schools Causing Concern** from **6 schools in 2019** to only **2 schools in 2022.**



## Improve outcomes and well-being for pupils, particularly at KS4



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 Blaenau Gwent learners at Coleg Gwent settings.**



The Youth Service is established as an **accreditation centre** with Youth Workers also providing support for parents of Elected Home Education (EHE) young people wanting to deliver units.

Currently has contact with **18 EHE young people**, to provide a link with the service.

### An **Induction Programme** for new

headteachers and aspiring deputy headteachers has been delivered over 5 days with a range of areas covered including safeguarding, equalities and Inclusion.

**Very positive feedback from participants.**

A number of Blaenau Gwent senior leaders have applied for the 'aspiring headteacher' programme.



Schools continue to work with the Education Directorate to provide ideas and challenge on school improvement and inclusion, including on value for money.



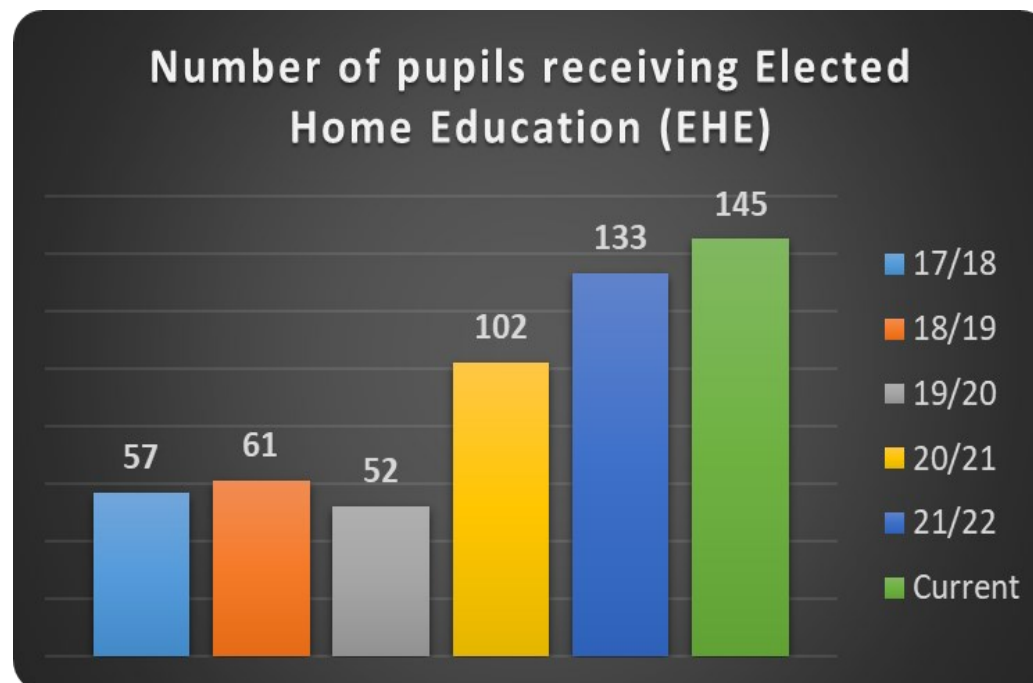


## Elected Home Education within Blaenau Gwent

As demonstrated in the chart there has been an increase in the number of home educated children within Blaenau Gwent over the past few years. Elected Home Education (EHE) pupils continue to be supported by the Education Welfare Service, however this needs to be monitored closely going forward to ensure that the number of visits increase in line with the above.

**There are currently 145 pupils on the EHE database (16/02/23) compared to 137 for the same period last year. This is an increase of 5.8%.**

Twenty-nine of these pupils are from the Gypsy Roma Traveller Community (GRT).



Between 1st September 2022 and 16th February 2023, 38 children became EHE. Thirty of these were secondary aged; seven were primary age and one a reception age child whose mum intends to keep her home schooled.

Seven children were from schools outside of the Local Authority, seven children were from Ebbw Fawr Learning Community, 6 from Tredegar and 6 from Brynmawr.

Of the above, 22 learners decided to return to school and 6 were issued with attendance orders due to adequate home education requirements not being fulfilled and also returned to school within the stated time.



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



In addition to Welsh Government funding allocated directly to schools to support with the implementation of **ALN reforms**, the Council has also been allocated **additional funding of £215,000**. This is to provide high quality education and to improve pupil outcomes for all learners with an Additional Learning Need. The funding will focus on **improving additional learning provision, increased provision for complex needs and mental health and wellbeing support**.



**Pen-y-Cwm and River Centre secondary site remodelling** is now **underway** .  
**Further work to increase capacity forms part of mid-term and long-term plans.**



**Current Work at Pen-y-Cwm is subject to investment circa £150,000.**



This will reinstate specialist areas and includes the development of de-escalation spaces in 12 classrooms, renewing sensory equipment and developing the outdoor provision to include a hobbit house

Model photos showing examples of de-escalation space and hobbit house








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



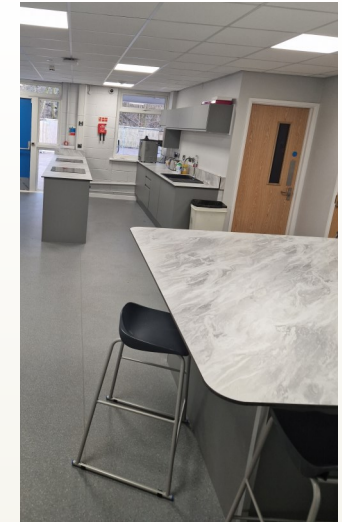
 **Better links** have been developed **with early years and health**, and a more comprehensive **tracking tool is being created** in order to improve the tracking of pupils with Additional Learning Needs **to ensure better planning of provision.**



Current remodelling of The River Centre Secondary Campus is subject to **investment circa £450,000.**

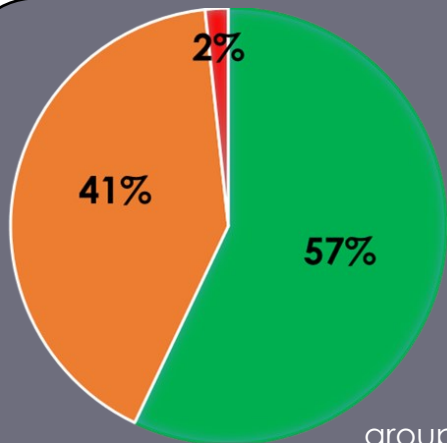


The campus will undertake a complete refurb — which includes 3 extra classrooms including sensory provision, new furniture, home economics and independent living area, outdoor muga and gym.





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



**Additional Learning Needs implementation Review** - A questionnaire was sent to all schools in Blaenau Gwent in order for them to identify where they feel more support is needed in terms of processes under the new Additional Learning Needs legislation. 16 questions were asked and the schools scored each area based on a Green, Amber, Red categorisation.

**25 questionnaires were sent and 17 returned**

numerous areas for development within schools.

The chart details the response breakdown.

We (the LA) support this identified development via ALN cluster groups and offering support to ALNCoS via the ALN/ Inclusive Practice Service

**The identified 'Red' areas relate to the opportunity for delivery of review meetings in the medium of Welsh**



## Inclusion policies, strategies and processes

in the current form have been distributed to governing bodies for all schools.

Policies translated to be in the **Welsh language** also to provide equity in our schools



The level of pupils eligible for **free school meals** has seen a **significant increase.**

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.

This represents the highest level of all Local Authorities In Wales as has been the case for the past 10 years







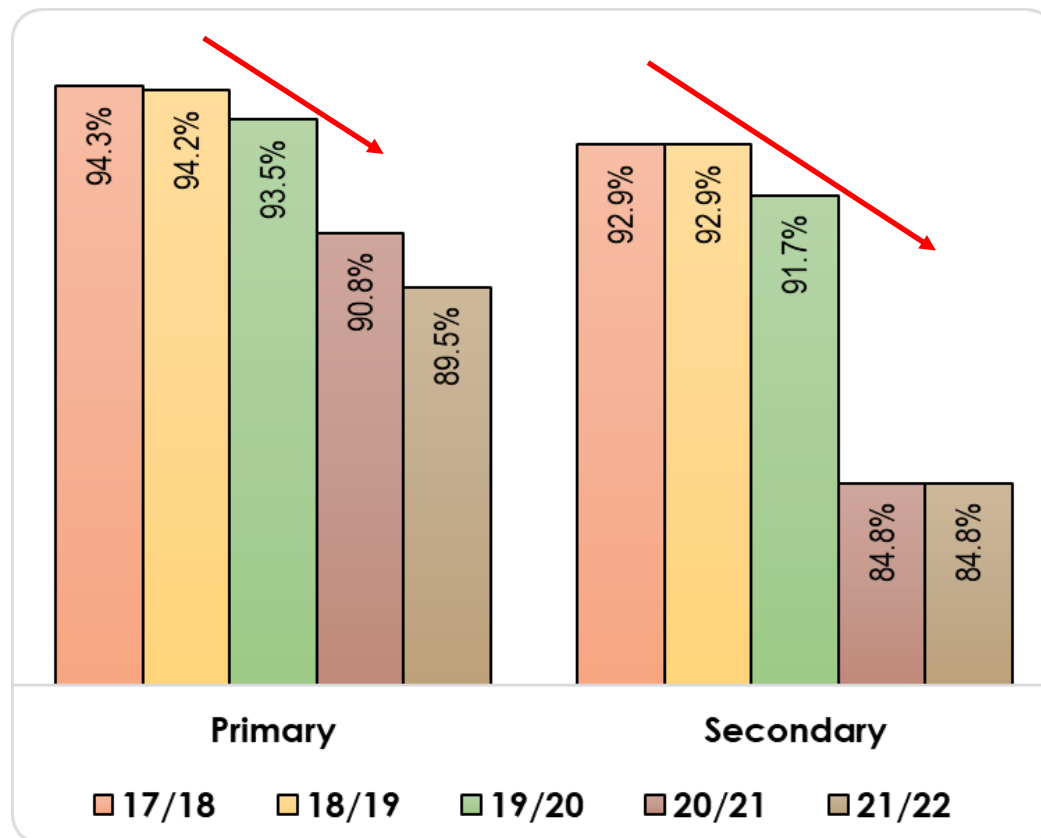
## Securing quality ALN/Inclusion provision, particularly to support Vulnerable groups of learners and those who are eFSM



Joint meetings between Head teachers, senior Education Welfare Officer and Youth Service Manager have taken place with secondary schools to support improving attendance and reducing exclusions. Further analysis will take place in order to identify the reason for decline and put mitigating actions in place.



School Attendance



Three of our primary schools have been supported to set up a **nurture provision** to support pupils with wellbeing issues, often as a result of returning to school after significant periods of blended learning as a result of Covid. There are increasing numbers of pupils with attachment concerns, which are exhibiting themselves in behaviours such as outbursts of frustration or school avoidance. Since the implementation of the Nurture (**Cwch**) model, exclusions in these schools has reduced. We aim to share the experience in the spring term with all other schools as a model of good practice.



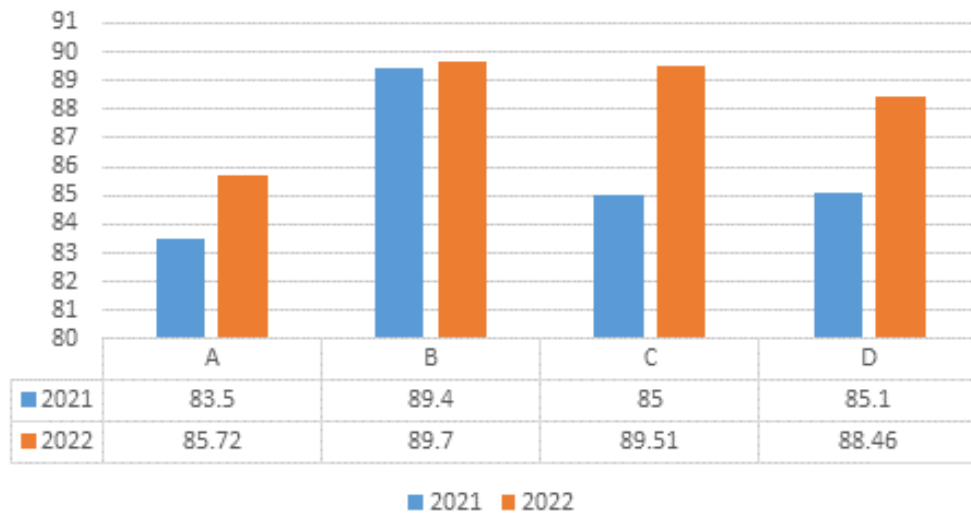
Attendance/exclusions are mirroring the national upward/downward trends.



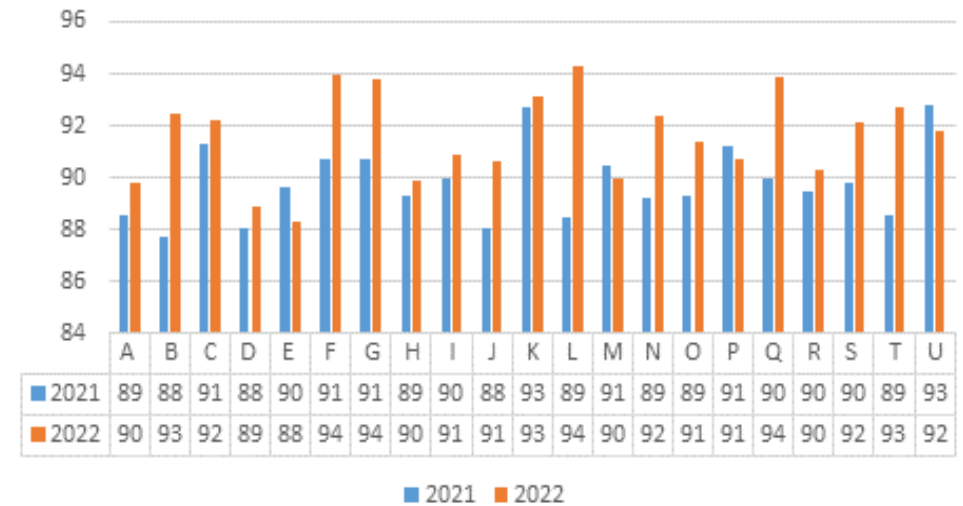
# Securing quality ALN/Inclusion provision, particularly to support Vulnerable groups of learners and those who are eFSM



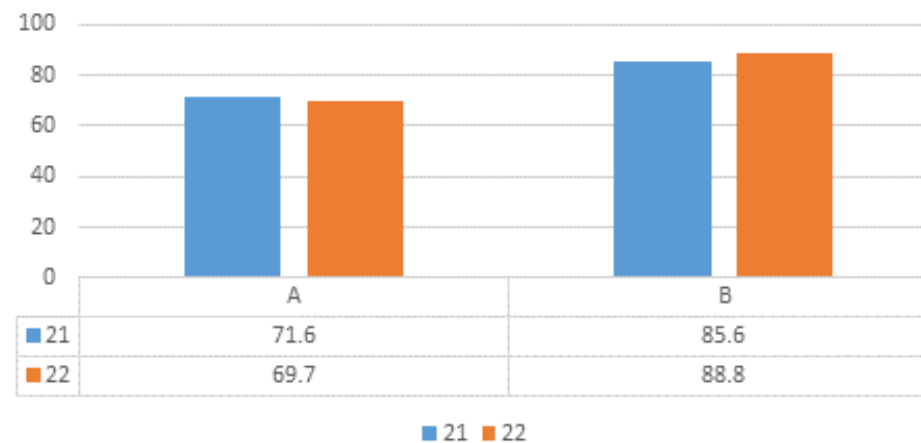
Secondary Attendance Data w/e 25th November



Primary Attendance Data w/e 25th November



Special School Attendance Data w/e 25th November



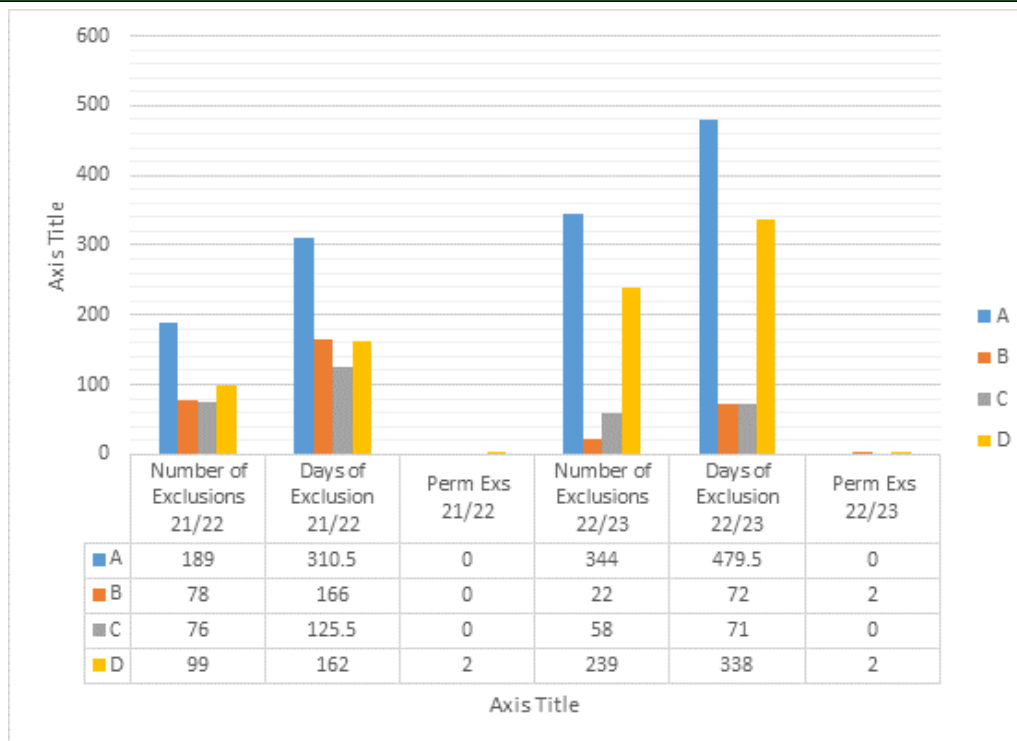


## Securing quality ALN/Inclusion provision, particularly to support Vulnerable groups of learners and those who are eFSM



The exclusion data below is showing the increase for the period 2nd September 2022 to the 10th March 2023 when compared to the same period last year. However, similar patterns of increases are being experienced by LAs across Wales post COVID.

Data analysis	Number of Exclusions (Increase)	Days of Exclusion (Increase)	Perm Exclusion (Increase)
Secondary	221	196.5	4
Primary	8	36	0
Special Schools	2	20.5	0
<b>Increase/Decrease</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>4</b>



### Secondary Exclusions (Period above 2<sup>nd</sup> Sept – 10<sup>th</sup> March)

School A and School D have both increased the number of their exclusions and the days lost to exclusions, whilst schools B and C have seen a reduction. The Education Welfare Service are working closely with the schools experiencing an increase in order to address the reasons behind exclusion.

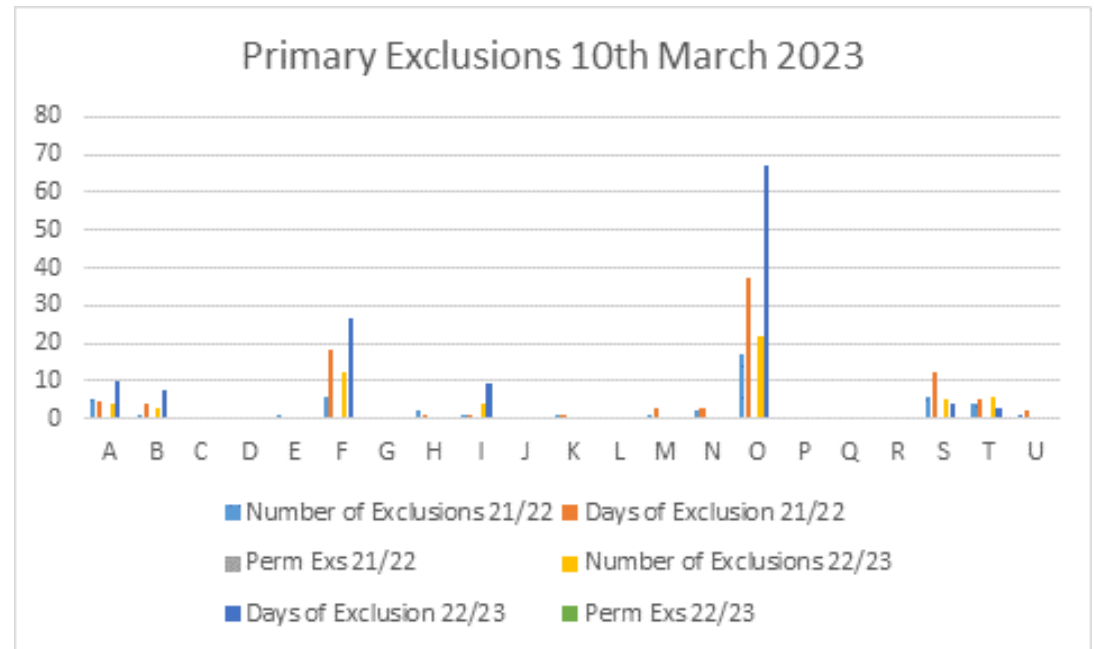


# Securing quality ALN/Inclusion provision, particularly to support Vulnerable groups of learners and those who are eFSM



## Primary Exclusions (Period above 2<sup>nd</sup> Sept – 10<sup>th</sup> March)

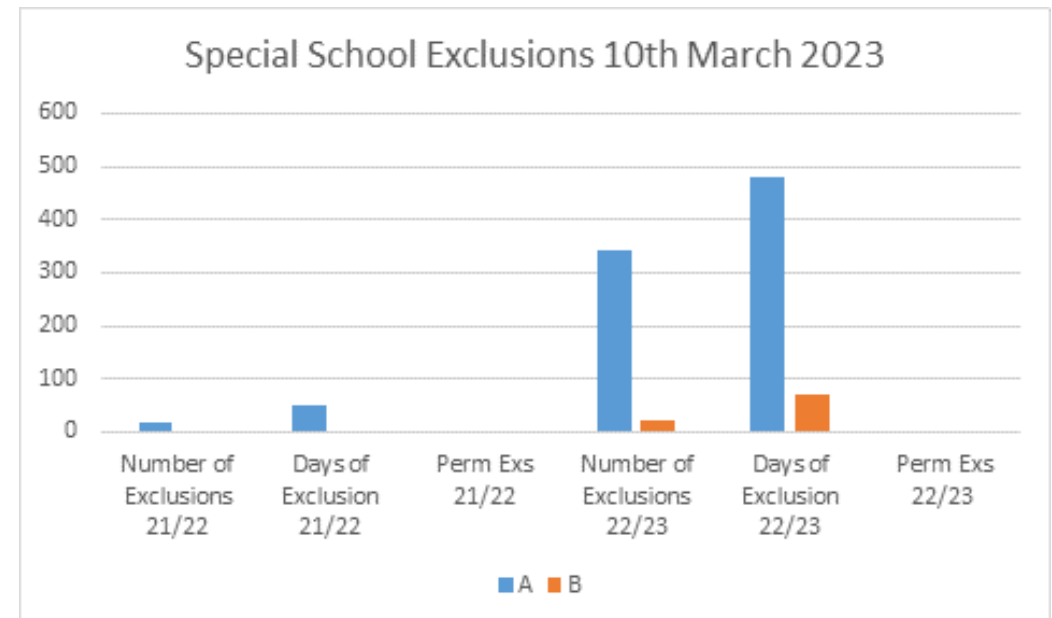
Positively, only 7 of BG's primary schools have issued any exclusions this year to date compared to 13 schools for the same period last year. However, the number of exclusions and the days lost are higher in 5 out of the 7 schools that are issuing exclusions. Education Welfare Service are working closely with those schools in order to support early intervention to further reduce exclusions. One of the schools has developed a nurture base which has had a positive impact on the amount of exclusions.



## Special School Exclusions (Period above 2<sup>nd</sup> Sept – 10<sup>th</sup> March)

This period has only seen exclusions from one of our special schools. There has been an increase in the number of exclusions in this school and days lost. The Education Welfare Service are working in partnership with the school to look at support that can be provided to address reasons behind exclusions.

The 3 main reasons for exclusions across all settings are persistent disruptive behaviour (279), verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against an adult (198) and physical assault against a pupil (98). When analysing exclusion data, it would be important to take into account that it may involve a small number of learners who are excluded more than once.







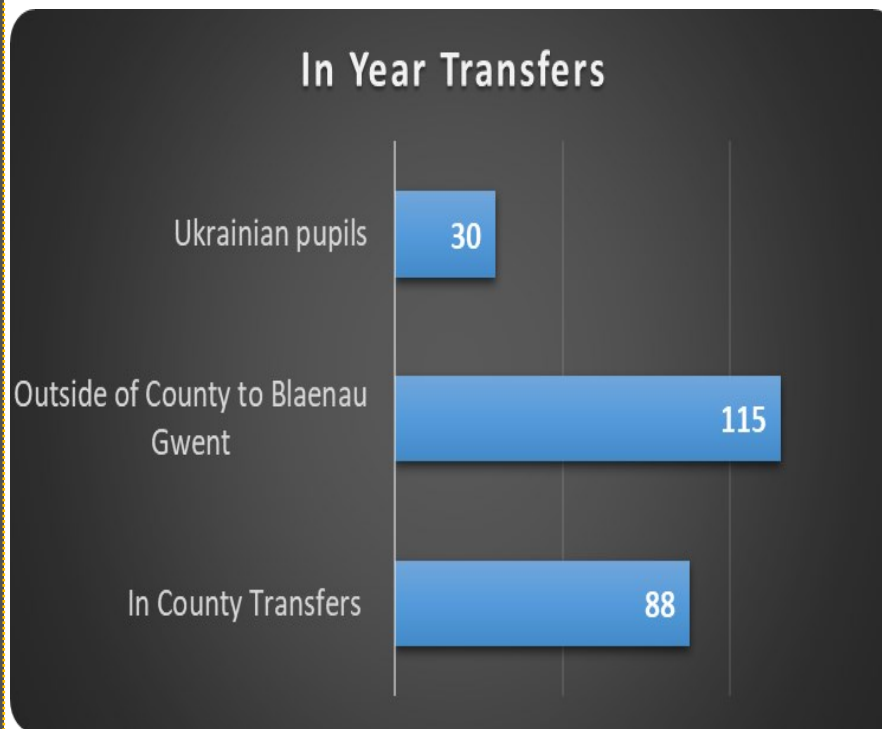
# Transforming education in line with responsive school support services and a school estate that is fit for the 21st Century



All **admission rounds** were completed for 2022/23 academic year with **100% of first preferences being met**. This is attributable to the effective monitoring and management of school capacities and pupil places along with the continued achievement of surplus place reduction.

## There have been **233 In Year Transfers**

between April and December 2022, the majority of applicants moving into Blaenau Gwent 100% of these transfers were **processed within 15 days**



The 2023/24 **Home to School Transport Policy** has been published

The transport appeals procedure has been implemented and is working effectively with **1 appeal being upheld** within the period

School admissions is now a fully online process

Options for further **engagement and promotion** is being explored to **increase the number of in-time applications** for reception and secondary school



**INTEGRATION / COLLABORATION** - Strategic links with key partners such as the EAS, Coleg Gwent, Schools, WBL providers continue to be effective, ensuring that Blaenau Gwent is well placed to continue with the transformation of the Education service and supporting our children and young people.





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



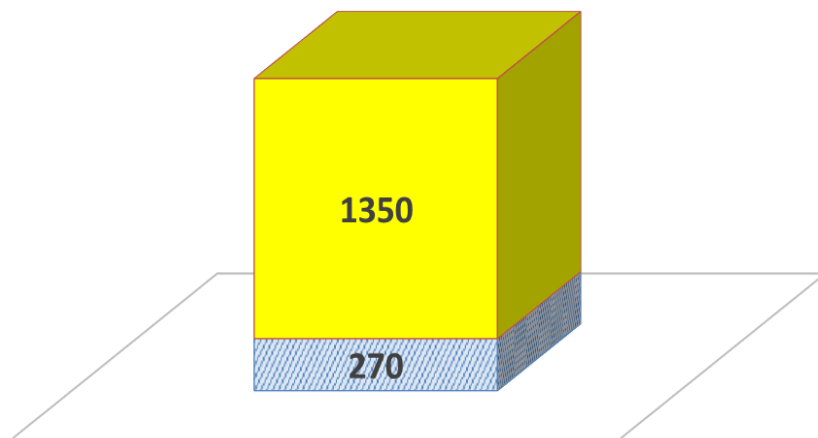
**INTEGRATION** - An effective internal partnership between the Education Directorate and the Build Environment, Environment and Regeneration continues, leading to the delivery of an efficient home to school / college transport provision.



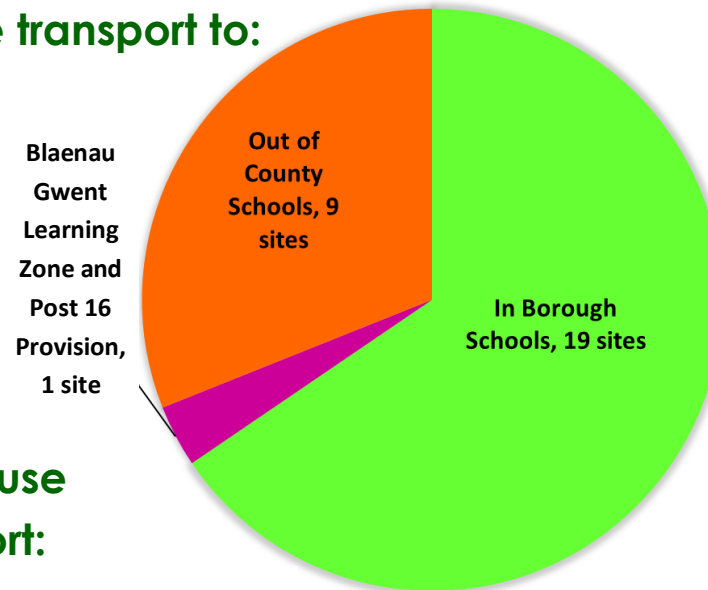
We procure and monitor 30 operators providing transport for over 80 contracts. This includes mainstream, Welsh-medium, faith education and specialist provision for ALN.

## Over 1600 school pupils use Home to School transport:

■ ALN Pupils      ■ Mainstream pupils



## We transport to:



We provide support for over 550 Post 16 students living in Blaenau Gwent, they are provided with a discounted bus ticket or travel grant



**Home to School Transport budget** is indicating an **overspend of £1m**, which can be attributed to an increase in pupil numbers utilising mainstream and ALN transport to settings in both primary and secondary schools within Blaenau Gwent and pupils attending out of county placements.

£600,000 of this will be funded from the cost of living reserve to support a temporary **20% uplift** provided to contractors to facilitate a temporary increase **for fuel costs**. Following a monthly review

process which monitored cost pressures, the uplift is due to finish 31st March 2023.

In recognition of the **cost of living crisis**, the Council has agreed to apply an inflationary price increase of 10% effective 1st April 2023.



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



Cymunedau **Dysgu** Cynaliadwy   
Sustainable Communities for **Learning**

The delivery of the Sustainable Communities for Learning **Band B programme** is well underway with an **investment of circa £26m** into the school estate.

The suitability and condition of the school estate is improving with circa 61% categorised as A/B

The Band B Programme seeks to deliver the following key projects:

- **Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg Refurbishment**
- **Ebbw Fawr Primary Redevelopment**
  - Glyncoed Primary New Build
  - Rhos y Fedwen Primary Refurbishment
- **Continued Secondary School Re-modelling**

Progress on Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg refurbishment and Glyncoed Primary new build can be found on Page 35



## LONG TERM -

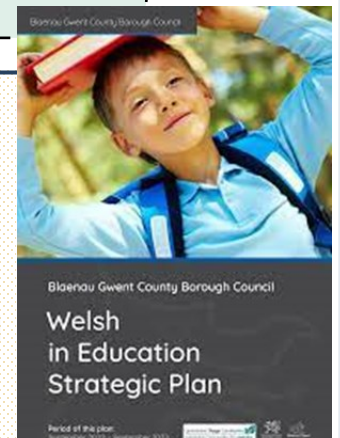
Estyn / WG ICT & Digitalisation Thematic Review took place in January 2023. Education colleagues, Schools, SRS & EAS were interviewed by WG & Estyn, initial feedback on our progress was positive.



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



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**). Momentum for the delivery of the project now needs to be maintained as the delivery of the WESP targets will be largely delivered through this provision and immersion proposals.





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



**The ICT Infrastructure and Connectivity Project** - The Local Authority has again made strong progress in line with its strategy for improving standards in ICT. This has involved continued progression of the Infrastructure and Connectivity Project, implementation of Waves 1-4 of the Welsh Government HWB EdTech Programme and work towards the development of a strategy and associated sustainability plan for both infrastructure and devices in Blaenau Gwent.

### ICT & Digitalisation Blaenau Gwent Context

In 2016 Blaenau Gwent invested approx.

**£650K in ICT infrastructure** as part of the Infrastructure and Connectivity Project

- In 2019/2020 Welsh Government launched the **Hwb Ed Tech Programme** this allowed the Authority to continue on our digital journey to further improve our network infrastructure and to replace all end of life devices within Schools
  - Device sustainability- Schools are now using a 20% plan to refresh devices over 5-year period in order to maintain the standard of devices achieved through the Hwb Ed Tech Programme. Individual sustainability plans have been discussed and agreed with schools
- In collaboration with the Shared Resource Service (SRS) Education have worked alongside all schools within the Service Level Agreement (SLA) to standardise all infrastructure to ensure adherence to the Education Digital Standards. This includes broadband connectivity, data network cabinet standards, routers and switches, cabling standards, wireless network standards, device management standards and web filtering standards.

The **Educational Digital Standards** are designed to assist schools to understand, manage and implement their digital environment. The Standards also provide guidance on how schools should future-proof their digital environment to meet the needs of a more digitally focused school curriculum. The standards suggest all infrastructure work undertaken to meet the standards should be carefully considered, planned and procured in compliance with national procurement regulations and installed by professional organisations.





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



A draft **ICT strategy** will be issued to schools for consultation during the Spring term 2023, the Vision for ICT within Education is as follows:

*'To secure continued development ensuring that all learners regardless of age or demographic have continued safe access to a blend of digital resources, hardware and cloud-based learning throughout the course of their education'.*



There are 9 priority areas identified within the strategy. These areas have been focused on heavily over the past 2 years, we will continue to progress these in line with the Digital competency framework.

- Infrastructure and Connectivity
- Digital Inclusion
- Device Sustainability
- Migration to and use of Hwb
- Digital tools and resources
- Training and Development
- Online Safety
- Support for Schools
- Education Management and support systems
- Blaenau Gwent corporate approach and overview





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



The Education Portfolio is now in the third year of a five year agreement with **the Aneurin Leisure Trust (ALT)**. The relationship between the Council and the Leisure Trust during this time has been transformed and positive outcomes continue to be achieved.



The visual dashboard here highlights progress against the Key Performance Indicators:

Area	Target	Outcome	Key Drivers
Governance, Leadership & Advocacy	Green >90%		Waiting on date for the Strategic Board meeting. Once completed this KPI will revert back to green. All else on track
	Amber <90% >80%		
	Red <80%		
Financial Sustainability	Green 1% of Target		Catering is currently not seeing the impact of the cost of living crisis with sales continuing to show good YOY growth. Reforecast due in November to set a realistic outcome on year end.
	Amber <1% of Target		
	Red >5% of Target		
Use of the Services	Green Target met		Marked as Amber due to footfall counter issues. Estimates have been taken using a calculation of income as a % of sites that we know are accurate
	Amber 10% of target		
	Red >10% of Target		
Operational Performance	Green 80%-100%		All performing well. Receiving great feedback from function bookings in BHAP where the centre (bar 1 day) is now fully booked for the remainder of the calendar year
	Amber 70%-79%		
	Red 0%-79%		
Customer & Staff Satisfaction	Green >55%		Ahead of benchmark for Sports Centres. should be in a position to launch NPS into all sites during Q2
	Amber <55% >45%		
	Red <45%		
Library Services Standards	Green >80%		No Full audit to date. Scaled down audit 21/22 resulted in all 12 core measures being met. The report has gone to BGCBC
	Amber 70% - 79%		
	Red <79%		
Environmental Sustainability	Green Within 5% of Target		To date (September) utilities are better than Target which is set at 6% lower than base year.
	Amber Within 10% of Target		
	Red >10% of Target		
Asset Management	Green >90%		To date (Q2) 10 activities planned 6 completed.
	Amber <90% >80%		
	Red <80%		



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



Through a partnership approach the Youth Service now includes a focus on Youth Homelessness and Wellbeing.

## Youth Service

The Youth Service provides a number of high quality projects providing young people with personal support, advice, guidance, advocacy and counselling services in school and community settings this is supported by a well-developed 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.**

The Youth and Community Team continue to support young people to prevent youth **homelessness and to support mental health and wellbeing.**

The team has continued to support individuals on a one to one basis, along with groups and community projects. These young people are often in precarious housing situations, and support is based around navigating appropriate information, advice and guidance from other services to help provide some stability and to enable them to improve their housing situation. This has continued to develop, with ongoing relationships with partners growing and becoming more efficient and effective.

**During the last academic year, 34 young people were supported on a one to one basis.**



We will continue to further establish Youth Homelessness and wellbeing programmes, funded by the Youth Support Grant.



**Safeguarding** is an important aspect of the Youth Service.

Between September 2021 and August 2022, **44 referrals (DTRs)** were made to Social Services. . More detail relating to these are included in the Joint Safeguarding Report <https://democracy.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/ielistDocuments.aspx?CId=1248&MId=2555&Ver=4&LLL=0>



The service area continues to meet regularly with Youth Support Services and partners through the Raising Aspirations Group, to maintain and further develop a co-ordinated, partnership approach.

Meetings also continue with Secondary School head teachers and /or link staff, to ensure they are fully involved where appropriate.





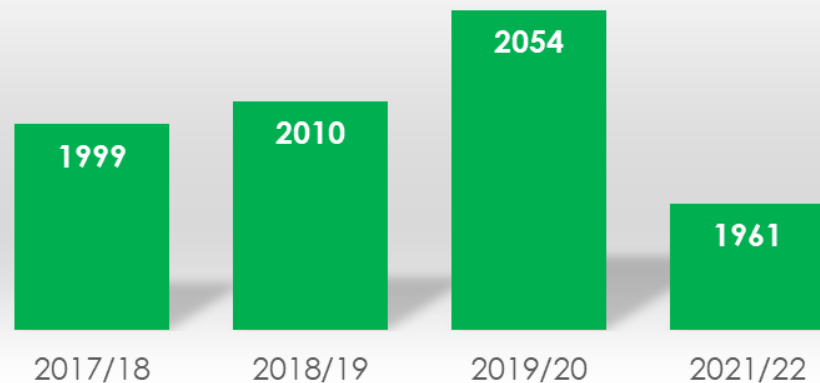
# Delivering effective young people and partnership provision, with a focus on lifelong learning and leisure/recreation provision to meet community need



## The number of 11-25 year olds supported by the Youth Service

during 2021/22 is 1961 (Reach of 17%). This is lower than the 2019/20 pre Covid data, but shows that the reach has almost returned to pre-pandemic levels, despite still working within restrictions at the beginning of the year.

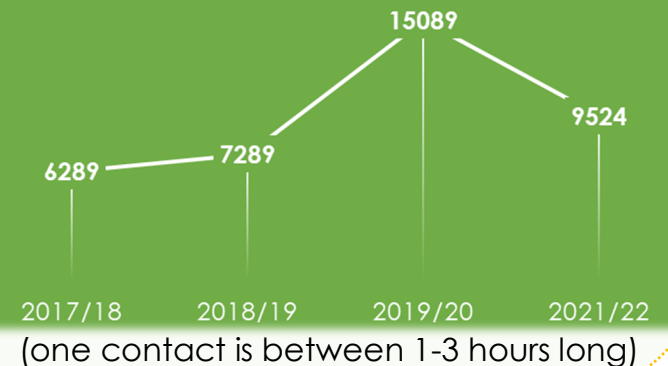
Number of 11-25 year olds supported by the Youth Service



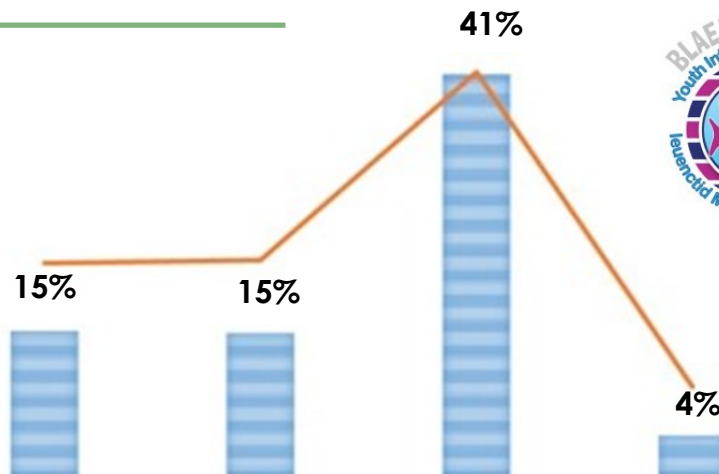
## The number of additional contacts made with anonymous young people (not registered with the service)

through the 11-25 Counselling Service, detached youth work, outreach and out of school activities and events with some online activities offered

ADDITIONAL CONTACTS MADE WITH ANONYMOUS PEOPLE



Out of the number of 11-25 year olds supported by the Youth Service above, the % that have gained nationally recognised qualifications has decreased



	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2021/22
Number of young people supported (11-25) that gained accredited qualifications	306	301	847	86
Number of qualifications achieved	448	456	851	188



## Long Term - Reliance on external funding is a risk.

However, securing European Social Funding until 2023 has provided some stability with the most vulnerable young people in the community having support for the past five years. SPF applications have been submitted which includes funding to continue the support for young people through the Inspire programmes. Welsh Government Youth Support Grant funding has now been given as a 3 year indicative allocation. This has allowed better planning for the future, both internally and with external partners.





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

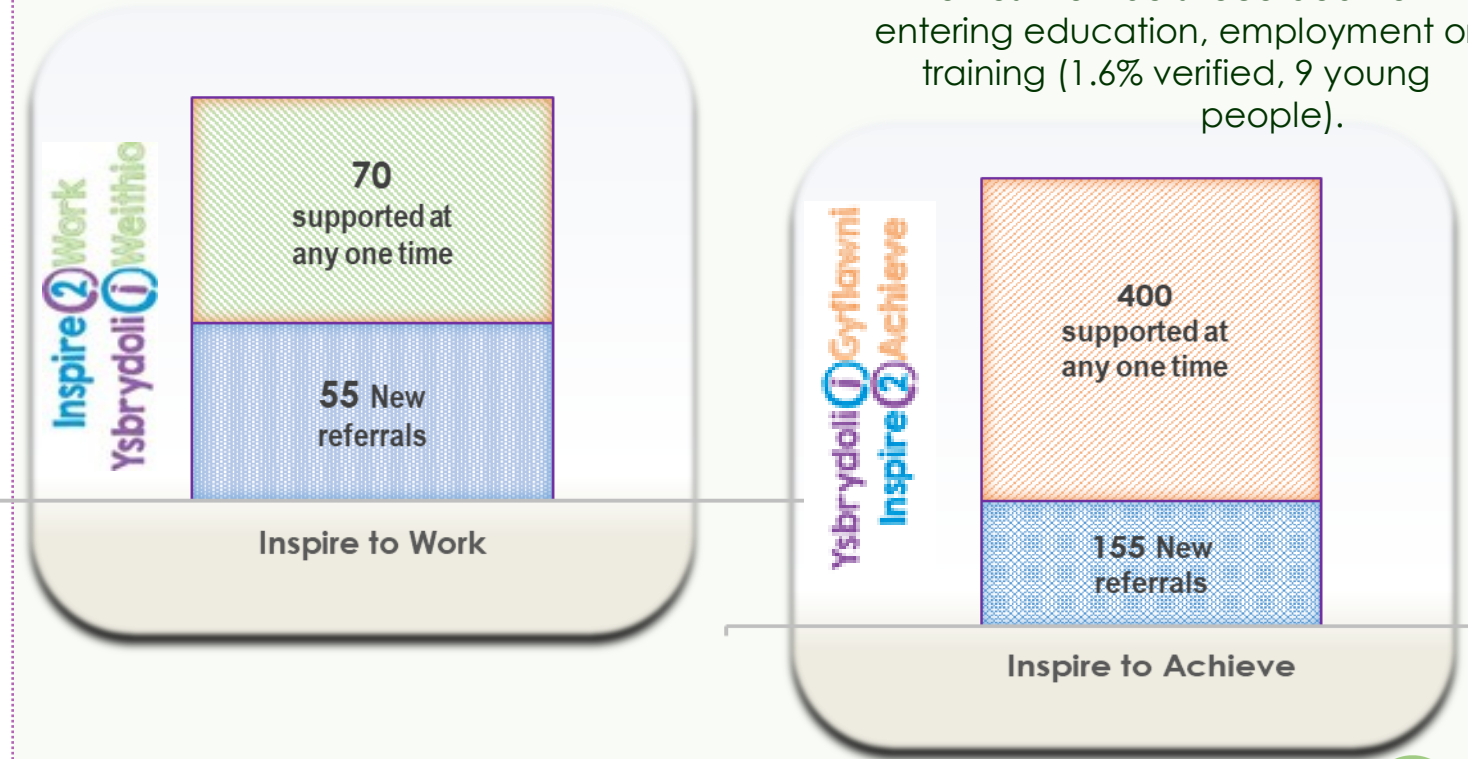


Both core and external funding has been secured to **continue a variety of projects to meet identified needs** and include:-

- Inspire 2 Achieve;
- Inspire 2 Work;
- Youth Homelessness;
- Mental Health and Wellbeing;
- Duke of Edinburgh;
- Detached and Outreach Youth Workers;
- Positive Futures (ASB programmes);
- Open for Youth Nights;
- Youth Clubs;
- Youth Information Service;
- Young Ambassadors (YAMs);
- 11-25 Counselling Service;
- Young Reps Volunteering Programme; and
- school holiday programme.



The **Inspire to Achieve** and **Inspire to Work** programmes are highly effective in supporting young people to overcome barriers to either remain in or enter education, training or employment. The projects directly impact on young people improving their attendance, attainment or behaviour, as well as overcoming personal barriers. Through Inspire, transitional support is provided to identified young people moving from year 6 to year 7, in-between school terms and post 16. Data from Careers suggests that this additional, bespoke support has enhanced the transition of young people throughout the lifetime of the programmes and again this year, maintaining the lowest numbers recorded not entering education, employment or training (1.6% verified, 9 young people).



Plans are now ongoing to Implement the closure of the Inspire 2 Achieve project and Inspire 2 Work programmes, and prepare for the new Shared Prosperity Fund People and Skills programmes.





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

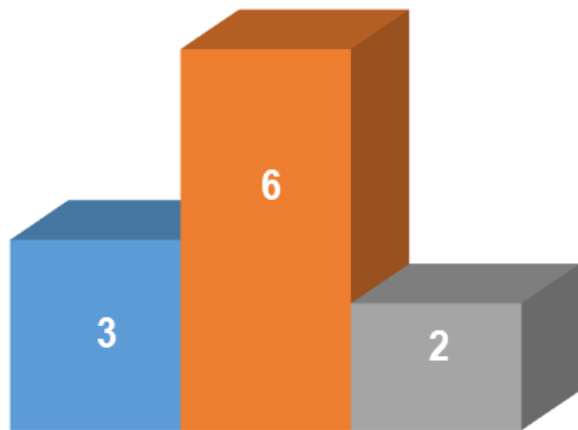


The Council's Corporate Risk Register includes one corporate risk with a specific link to the Education Directorate and this is relating to schools in an Estyn category.

**The Education Directorate Risk Register has 11 risks, with 3 having a high residual status.....**

## EDUCATION DIRECTORATE RISKS

■ High risk ■ Medium risk ■ Low risk



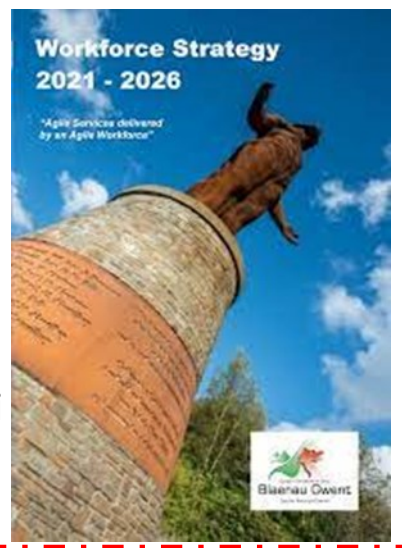
- Failure to minimise the risks associated with pupil regression linked to COVID-19 learning disruption and to maximise learner progression.
- Dependency on funding around ESF Inspire projects in youth service.
- Failure of schools to improve following the issue of a pre-warning and statutory warning notice.

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).

**Schools** were provided with a **8.4% uplift in budgets via the Individual School Budget** in 2022-23

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

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



**This Workforce Strategy aims to build on existing good practice and continuing to promote the Council as a good place to work – developing a workforce that feels connected to and can meet the current and future needs of our community.**



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



The management of school balances has been effective and budget considerations are discussed at the School Budget Forum.

**2022/23 Portfolio is underspending in all areas except Transport**



New and better processes have been put in place between Education & Finance to ensure improved monitoring of the budgets.

A favourable revenue **end of year** position was shown for 2021-22 and a break-even capital budget out-turn.



Education Directorate Budget April 2022—December 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
	<i>School based Structural Maintenance</i>				
	<i>School Based Insurances</i>				
4	Supporting SEN - Schools:	1,730,430	1,690,970	39,460	2.28
	<i>SLA's with River Centre, SENCOM, Peny Cwm</i>				
	<i>Special Needs Equipment</i>				
	<i>Fees for Out of County Placements</i>				
	<i>Recoupment</i>				
5	Strategic Management:	2,264,410	2,265,330	-920	-0.04
	<i>School Based IT Costs</i>				
	<i>Premature Retirement/Redundancy Costs</i>				
	<i>Existing Early Retirement Costs</i>				
6	Assuring Access to Schools	2,439,820	3,048,299	-608,479	-24.94
	<i>Home to School Transport</i>				
	<i>Education Welfare Service</i>				
7	Facilitating School Improvement:	396,350	402,631	-6,281	-1.58
	<i>SNAP</i>				
	<i>SLA's with EAS</i>				
	<i>LA/School Additional Support</i>				
8	Supporting SEN - LEA:	380,730	297,567	83,163	21.84
	<i>Education Psychology Service</i>				
9	Further Education & Training	135,960	131,747	4,213	3.10
	<i>Home to College Transport</i>				
10	Youth Service	345,390	343,663	1,727	0.50
11	Other Expenditure:	143,850	117,233	26,617	18.50
	<i>Early Years</i>				
	<i>Contribution to Youth Offending Service</i>				
	<i>School Counselling</i>				
12	Education Departmental Budget:	195,970	87,734	108,236	55.23
	<i>Senior Management</i>				
	<i>Schools Transformation</i>				
	<i>Inclusion</i>				
13	Corporate Recharges:	4,671,690	4,671,689	1	0.00
	<i>School Based Capital Charges</i>				
	<i>LA Based IT Costs</i>				
	<i>LA Based Accomodation Costs</i>				
	<i>Staff Support Services</i>				
	Leisure:	4,176,620	4,179,846	-3,226	-0.08
	<i>Management Fee - Aneurin Leisure Trust &amp; Corporate Recharges - Capital Charges, IT Costs, Premises Insurance, Staff Support</i>				
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>68,304,630</b>	<b>68,671,563</b>	<b>-366,933</b>	<b>-0.54</b>



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



**The 2023-24 revenue budget included an overall increase for Education of which:**

- **Individual School Budget received an uplift of 4.2% (£2,02m) and awarded cost pressures totalling £0.115m**
- **Local Education Authority Budget received cost pressures totalling £0.923m mainly in relation to Home to School transport and ALN Reform**



## Case Study - Sustainable communities for learning

The Blaenau Gwent Sustainable Communities for Learning (formerly 21st Century Schools) Band B Programme commenced in April 2019 and is set to conclude in 2025. The Programme will realise an investment of £19.6million throughout the Blaenau Gwent school estate. The Welsh Government intervention rate for Band B is a 65%/35% split, in favour of Local Authorities.

### Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg

The remodelling works in relation to Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg commenced in the Summer term 2021 and were **completed during the Autumn term 2022**, there will be an official Ministerial opening of the provision in May 2023. The works involved the establishment of a sensory room and nurture provision, a STEM facility and radio rooms and the development of the outdoor provision including a sensory garden and outdoor play. This involved an **investment of £1m** in the school building.



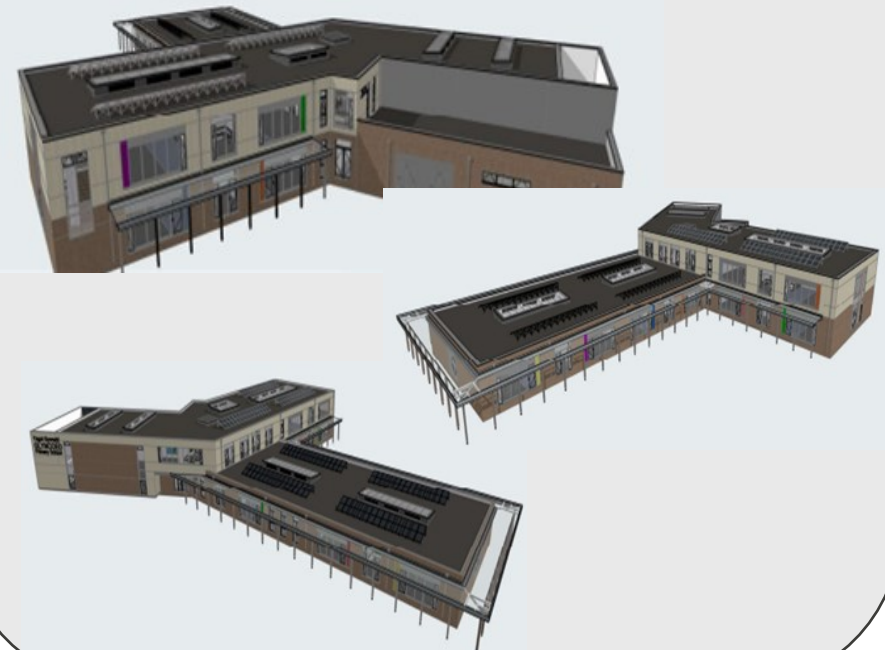
Sensory Room



Nurture Room

### Glyncoed Primary New build

This project involves the replacement of the current Glyncoed Primary School with 360 place primary school including a separate childcare facility on a site adjacent to the current location. The contractor Morgan Syndall was appointed to deliver the project in October 2022 and work has commenced on site and is progressing well, the scheme will be completed for **occupation Spring 2024**





## Case Study - Aneurin Leisure Trust

All areas of the business have seen year on year growth which has been in part attributed to the investments that have been made across Aneurin Leisure Trust over the last 2 years such as:

- Fully refurbished Sports Centres
- Improved golf products (mini golf & upgraded driving range)
- Additional activities at Parc Bryn Bach including: paddle boarding memberships, Go-karts, outside food kiosk, newly created sensory gardens (Parc Bryn Bach & Bedwellty House) and a newly created raised patio by lake side.



Alongside these investments ALT have been working in partnership with several Council departments to support various funded projects:

- Summer of Fun (supported by Sports Development, Libraries & park teams). Over 400 young people took part in the Youth Service's Summer of Fun programme and over 250 young people took part in the Winter of Wellbeing programme.
- Welsh Government reward and recognition funding for Social Services staff (supported through a voucher scheme, team building days and meeting space).
- Supporting the Ukrainian refugee crisis with a relaxation hub, English speaking courses and employment support in the Adult Education buildings and a voucher scheme set up to allow access to leisure to help integrate into the community.
- Assisted submission to the Rhaglen grant to support the Trinity Chapel project in Abertillery.
- Contributing to developments of the Shared Prosperity Fund - People and Skills plans, which will replace current ESF Adult Employability support.

## Case Study - Schools in Blaenau Gwent are learning about 5G connectivity



**The Education Directorate continue to work with partners, both internal and external in order to support our pupils development.**



To enhance our school ICT delivery plans, schools in Blaenau Gwent are learning how 5G connectivity could transform the way we live and work with a new interactive Augmented Reality experience that is being delivered as part of the 5G Wales Unlocked programme, an innovation project co-funded by Welsh Government and various project partners.

Education and Regeneration teams worked with Welsh Government, Jam Creative Studios and Technocamps to create a way of educating the next generation about the benefits of 5G. The decision was to create an enrichment programme based around an Augmented Reality (AR) game – bringing to life the benefits that advanced connectivity can bring to towns like Ebbw Vale.

The content of the programme linked with the key aspects of the local industry whilst contributing to the relevant Areas of Learning, which firmly embeds it with what teachers are delivering already and enriches the learner's experience. We are also exploring the possibility of developing the format further by linking it with the 5G Immersive Environment; this gives a fully rounded experience to the next generation".

The AR game, developed by Jam Creative Studios and delivered in schools by Technocamps allows learners to work in teams to unlock 5G connectivity around a virtual 3D town by carrying out fun STEM activities.



Played by small groups on iPads, the activities span some of the many different sectors that 5G connectivity will transform; Healthcare, agriculture, manufacturing, recycling and transport and enables learners to see a clear change in infrastructure as they walk around and explore in detail the large 3D virtual town environment.

Aimed at learners in years 6 and 7, the experience will also help with their transition from primary to secondary education, as year 7 digital lead learners will be involved in working with the year 6 as they carry out their tasks.



## Case Study - Councillors welcome changes for Additional Learning Needs

Councillors in Blaenau Gwent have supported two key strategies and associated policies aimed at improving the experiences and educational outcomes of children and young people with Additional Learning Needs (ALN).

The People Scrutiny Committee heard how the way pupils with Additional Learning Needs are supported has been reviewed in line with the Welsh Government's ALN Reform programme. All children and young people with ALN will be provided with tailored Individual Development Plans, which will set out the approach to support their needs and the additional learning provision required.

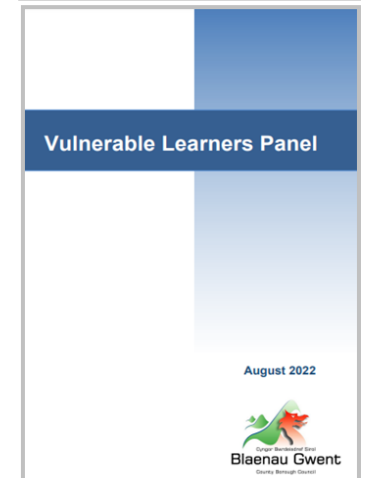
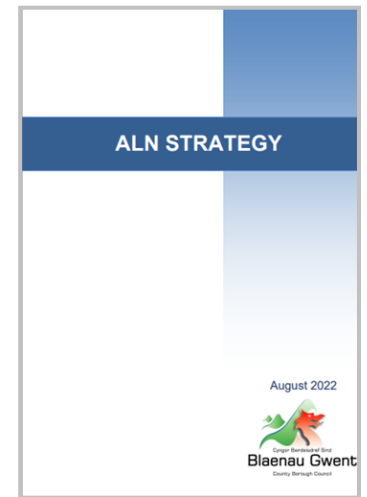
An ALN Reform working group, made up of Local Authority Education officers and Headteachers, have been meeting to work on the plans and to inform the new approaches – particularly the high-level ALN Strategy and the Inclusion Strategy.

### **The Council's Cabinet Member for People & Education, Cllr Sue Edmunds says:**

“Supporting children and young people with Additional Learning Needs is fundamental to our vision for Better Schools, Better Citizens and Better Communities. It is vital that everyone is working together to ensure that these learners are well supported in both their education and wellbeing needs and are achieving their full potential and desired outcomes.

“I'm pleased that Scrutiny have today supported these changes to ALN provision which, in our view, can only be seen as an extremely positive step forward in the education and learning experiences of some of our most vulnerable learners in Blaenau Gwent.”

You can read the report to Scrutiny and view some of the new policies/strategies here - <http://democracy.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1248&MId=2540&LLL=0>





## Case Study - Welsh In Education Strategic Plan & Welsh Medium Seedling Provision



The Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) 2022-2032 is a 10-year plan, Blaenau Gwent has an ambitious target of increasing the Year 1 cohort (750 pupils) taught via the medium of Welsh to 75 pupils -10% by 2032 (baseline as per plasc 2021 data 29 pupils - 4%).

As part of this plan the Blaenau Gwent will open a **210 place Welsh Medium Seedling Primary School** on the Chartist Way Site, in the Tredegar/Sirhowy Valley. The school will be developed via a seedling growth model from **September 2023**. The Council are currently in the process of letting the contract for the new build and it is anticipated that the contractor will be appointed Spring 2023. It is anticipated, the new school building will be completed for occupation by September 2024. The school will open initially in its temporary location of Bedwellty House, Tredegar for nursery and reception pupils, with a new year group being added each year. Initial governance arrangements will be under Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg with a view to reviewing this after an initial 2/3 year period. Education Transformation are currently working with the Welsh in Education Forum (WEF) and Rhag in order to promote the new provision.

In order to support the seedling provision and develop increased capacity across childcare and early years' settings, a further 2 Welsh medium childcare settings are being established – at the Glyncoed Primary new build site, and in the new Tredegar seedling school provision. Currently there are 2 well established childcare provisions located in Brynithel and at Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg.

# Case Study - Equality in our education and learning

Equality is something that is at the heart of everything that we do as a local authority. Effective partnership working enables us to provide advice and guidance to support schools around equalities and provide information through school bulletins (equality, diversity & inclusion). We also work with schools and the Children's Grand Council in order to support children & young people to have a voice.

The first Children's Grand Council session of this academic year was the **first in person session for two years. 51 pupils attended** the session with nearly all primary schools participating, the outstanding two schools were delivered an online session at a later date to allow all pupils to take part. The session covered the following areas.....

## Positive Body Image & Healthy Food Relationships

What do food adverts and images tell you about food?

Vitamins, minerals and iron?

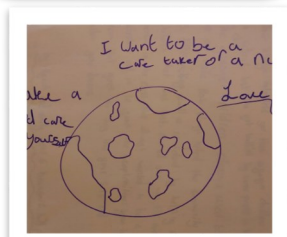


## Well-being and Resilience

What does a good and safe community look like?

GOOD ☺  
 Life is good!  
 nobody will not understand  
 Life is good!  
 The first time you stood  
 life is great!  
 hopefully you relate  
 Life is great!  
 it's like a Saint.  
 -Chloe 11

The children were asked to get creative, about what a good future would look like for them...



## Children & Young Peoples own words...

What impact do you think these images could have on young people

That COVID changed the way people eat.

Adults tell you to eat healthy

lose trust in companies for lying ads

too much of this will make you overweight

make food loom yummy

That unhealthy foods are healthy

It could give them a balanced diet, because you have to eat mainly the good foods but a bit of bad is ok too.

They could eat more vegetables

Children might not understand the message

healthy food makes an impact on your body and fitness

encourage you to eat vegetables

That's your traffic light system

These images can change perspective of a young mind like stopping them eating at all.

Make it look good so more people go there

brings you happiness but you get diabetes

it's your traffic light system

Children may not want to eat food because of what it looks like

not everything means happiness

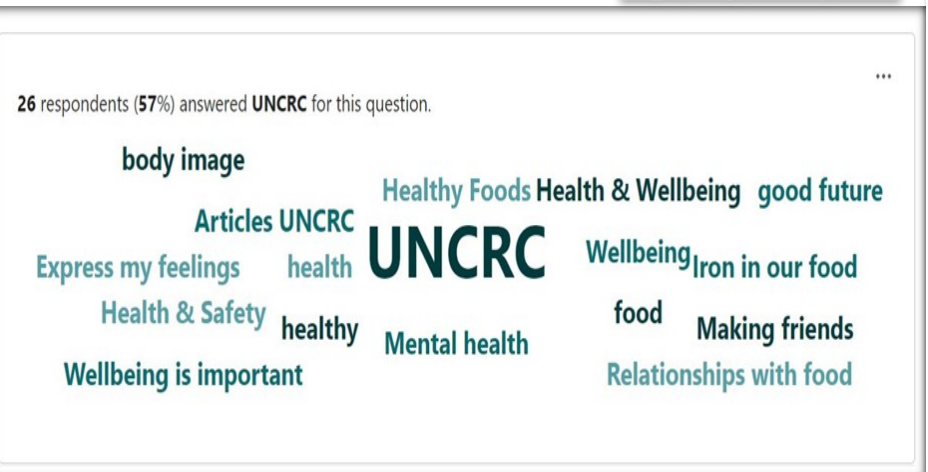
It makes young people want to buy unhealthy food

trick you

They are trying to persuade you on ads but when you go there you get something else

eating healthy could help you a lot

One thing they learnt today ...





## Member Engagement -

**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



## People, Partnerships and Engagement

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 Children & Young People understand about wellbeing and mental health.
- Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence.
- 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 Children & Young People 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 Children & Young People to have input into programme or policy development.
- Young people from Blaenau Gwent Youth Forum contribute to the scrutiny committee arrangements.
- Children & Young People 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 Blaenau Gwent Education System.
- Positive Body Image Campaign I Decide Me - Positive Body Image Campaign | Blaenau Gwent CBC ([blaenau-gwent.gov.uk](http://blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)).
- Let's Go Zero [https://youtube.com/watch?v=KKFGQ\\_q90CM&feature=share&si=EMSIkaIECMiOmarE6JChQQ](https://youtube.com/watch?v=KKFGQ_q90CM&feature=share&si=EMSIkaIECMiOmarE6JChQQ) Regional Mental Health Campaign Development.
- Youth Question time event 22-Gwent Youth Question Time 2022 | Blaenau Gwent CBC ([blaenau-gwent.gov.uk](http://blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)).

## Our Future Direction and areas that we feel we need to focus upon going forward

As stated at the beginning of this report our overall aim is to support delivery of our corporate objectives. Listed below are some of the areas we recognise that we need to continue to focus on improving, these areas include the actions identified from the recent Estyn Inspection. We recognise that even the achievements are not yet completed but remain areas for progress to be maintained and improved upon where possible.



As a council we are looking to '**Maximise learning and skills for all to create a prosperous, thriving, resilient Blaenau Gwent**'. Alongside the many achievements detailed throughout this report that have been delivered by the Education Directorate over this past year to support delivery of this corporate objective, we recognise that the following are areas that need further improvement:-

- Improve attendance rates in both Primary and Secondary sectors;
- Reduce school exclusions and support parents/carers who opt to Elective Home Educate (EHE). There are 3 schools with identified higher-levels of exclusions that will require targeted interventions;
- Continue to monitor and improve on attainment levels;
- Higher levels of language acquisition and reading across the board, but particularly in our very young children in early years; and
- Focus on improving the pace of change for Schools Causing Concern (SCC) improvement journeys.



As a council we are looking to '**Respond to the nature and climate crisis and enable connected communities**'. Alongside the many achievements detailed throughout this report we recognise that the following are areas that need further improvement:-

- Continue to effectively deliver sustainable communities for learning which are environmentally friendly;
- Further encourage nature friendly management on school grounds;
- Develop a schools Biodiversity policy and support with the integration; and
- Continue to engage all young people with the environment.



As a council we are looking to be '**An ambitious and innovative council delivering quality services at the right time and in the right place**'. Alongside the many achievements detailed throughout this report we recognise that the following are areas that need further improvement:-

- Further engagement and promotion to increase the 'on time' admission applications;
- Increase capacity at Pen-Y-Cwm and River Centre and reduce out of county placements, in turn reducing annual financial loss;
- ALN implementation review—act upon issues raised in questionnaire;
- Monitor Home to school transport funding issues;
- Secure external funding for European Social Fund (ESF) programmes e.g. Inspire;
- Ensure that our vision and strategic aims for education are fully understood by other officers, elected members, school staff and external partners;
- Develop a suitable vision and strategy for the future provision of ALN; and
- Improve the quality of self-evaluation, strategic planning and performance management.



As a council we are looking to '**Empower and support communities to be safe, independent and resilient**'. Alongside the many achievements detailed throughout this report that have been delivered by the Education Directorate over this past year to support delivery of this corporate objective, we recognise that the following are areas that need further improvement:-

- Monitor closely school place and sufficiency of all schools, use data more effectively to inform long term planning; and
- Continue to improve the reach of 11-25 year olds supported by Youth and increase the number that have gained qualifications.