

INCLUSION STRATEGY

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Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol

Blaenau Gwent

County Borough Council

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Introduction

“Inclusion requires the active involvement from all concerned. It places the onus on schools to adapt their organisation and their ways of responding to the needs of all children and young people and to value their development in all areas of school life.” (Inclusion and Pupil Support, WG 2016)

The Local Authority (LA) is committed to an approach of social inclusion of which inclusive education is a key dimension. This approach is aligned with the strategic direction of the Education Directorate and other linked strategies and policies and provides definitions for inclusion and the underpinning principles and values.

The LA recognises that there are a number of factors to consider in further developing a truly inclusive ethos across schools and education providers and has considered the direction of travel for Welsh Government (Curriculum for Wales reform, ALN reform, CAMHS transformation, support for vulnerable learners, thematic reviews by Estyn, research, school inspections, case studies, stakeholder views and the voice of the child in developing this approach).

The aim of this overarching strategy is to support the further development of our collective view of inclusion as being central to underpinning a high-quality local - based education, promoting good attendance and minimising the use of exclusion, wherever possible.

Participation is concerned with the quality of learners’ educational experiences and the extent to which they are accepted and feel that they belong. BG believe that all learners have a right to express their views about educational matters that affect them. We have a responsibility to listen to and learn from those views.

Achievement is concerned with learning outcomes. It is about what learners learn both inside and outside the classroom. Achievement, therefore, includes academic attainment, but it is a much broader concept that cannot be measured by tests alone.

Policy and Legislation

In recent years, the Welsh Government have issued a range of guidance, some of which has statutory status, which require LAs, schools, and other educational settings to:

- promote equality of opportunity for different groups of learners;
- review their policies and practice to ensure they do not discriminate against particular groups of learners; and,
- pro-actively promote equality in relation to disability, race, gender, religious belief and sexuality.

The LA considers that inclusion is a fundamental principle that underpins all our practice and procedures, and the LA is committed to an effective and inclusive education system in which all children and young people are:

- valued equally;
- treated with respect;
- given equal opportunities.

All children and young people should have access to an appropriate and high-quality education, which will inspire them to participate in lifelong learning. The LA, EAS, schools, early years and other educational settings will:

- work collaboratively to promote equality of opportunity for different groups of learners;
- review policies and practices to ensure they do not discriminate against groups of learners; and,
- pro-actively promote equality in all areas in relation to disability, race equality, gender, religious belief and sexuality.

Context

The Inclusion Strategy is supported by key policies and practices, which support the development of best practice in all schools and settings. The core guidance in relation to inclusion in Wales is found in Welsh Government's guidance document '*Inclusion and Pupils Support*' (2016). This guidance identifies a number of vulnerable groups of children and young people who may have additional learning needs (ALN) as identified in the ALNET (Wales) Act 2018.

The LA is committed to the seven core aims identified by the Welsh Government, which summarise the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

The LA believes in celebrating diversity as a source of richness and potential that benefits all. The LA's commitment is to act in accordance with relevant equality legislation, and the LA and Inclusion Service's various policies, a number of which have been created or updated in line with the ALNET (Wales) Act 2018 and its associated reforms including:

- ALN Policy
- Promoting Positive Relationships and Behaviours Policy
- Attendance Policy & Guidance
- Well Being Strategy
- Safeguarding in Education Policy
- Traveller School Attendance Guidance
- Policy for the Education of Pregnant School Girls and School Age Parents
- Policy and Guidance for Schools on the Use of Reduced Timetables
- Hard to Place Protocol
- Exclusion Guidance
- Reducing Restrictive Physical Interventions (RPI)
- Education Other Than at School (EOTAS) Guidance
- Blaenau Gwent Policy for the Education of CYP with Medical Needs
- Admission Guidance

Aims

The aim of this strategy is to set out the commitment of the LA to the principles of inclusive education and its responsibilities to implement this across all relevant service areas and activities.

Inclusive principles will inform the work of the LA within the context of Blaenau Gwent's support for lifelong learning with the following as a focus:

- review and further develop a holistic education approach to inclusion, wellbeing, behaviour and relationships;
- support and empower schools to further develop their coherent whole school approach to wellbeing, relationships and behaviour; support schools to reduce exclusions and improve attendance;
- provide a framework for associated guidance;
- promote effective partnerships and cluster working with and across schools; and,
- support effective working between schools and other education providers to share good practice.

Principles

Inclusion involves celebrating, not just tolerating, diversity and the creative use of resources to support all children and young people to learn effectively. The LA, EAS, schools and other educational settings will show good practice in relation to inclusion by:

- adopting a person centred approach to planning and delivery of services in order to meet individual needs;
- providing dynamic leadership and effective management to promote social and emotional well-being through inclusive and non-discriminatory practices;
- facilitating a multi-agency focus to provide early intervention through a team around the family approach;
- targeting resources, interventions and training through positive actions in accordance with identified need;
- improving educational access and participation, and promoting achievement for all, particularly those in vulnerable groups;
- providing high quality learning and teaching experiences which are flexible and respond to the changing needs of individuals and the community;
- reviewing policies and practices to facilitate the change process and improve and develop culture and ethos;
- communicating effectively with and supporting schools, education settings, parents/ carers, children and young people.

DEFINITIONS

a) **Inclusion**

“Inclusion requires the active involvement from all concerned. It places the onus on schools to adapt their organisation and their ways of responding to the needs of all children and young people and to value their development in all areas of school life.” (Inclusion and Pupil Support, WG 2016)

https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-05/guidance-inclusion-and-pupil-support_0.pdf

Welsh Government has, in recent years, issued a range of legislation and guidance which requires local authorities, schools, and other educational settings to:

- promote equality of opportunity for different groups of learners;
- review their policies and practice to ensure they do not discriminate against particular groups of learners, including those with characteristics protected by the Equalities Act 2010;
- pro-actively promote equality in relation to disability, race, gender, religious belief and sexuality;
- ensure the needs of vulnerable groups including those with additional learning needs are identified and met in a timely fashion;
- adopt person centred approaches.

b) **Vulnerable and Disadvantaged Learners**

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-08/guidance-supporting-vulnerable-disadvantaged-learners.pdf>

In its ‘Guidance for supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged learners’, Welsh Government stress that children may be seen as vulnerable for a number of reasons. In accordance with WG, Estyn also state that vulnerable children may be defined as those who may be more likely to experience emotional, social, and developmental barriers to learning. This may be as a result of their life experiences and disadvantage. A wide definition of vulnerable and disadvantaged learners has been adopted. It includes, but is not limited to, learners who are in one or more of the following groups:

- children with Additional Learning Needs (ALN)
- care-experienced children, including Children Looked After (CLA)
- those at risk of exclusion
- Minority Ethnic and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (MEGRT) learners who have English or Welsh as an additional language (EAL/WAL)
- young carers
- young offenders
- learners educated other than at school (EOTAS)
- children of refugees and asylum seekers
- learners from outside of the UK
- learners eligible for free school meals (eFSM)
- children at risk of harm, abuse or neglect.

Not all learners from these groups will face barriers to learning or be vulnerable to underachieving. Learners from these groups **may** face a range of barriers to achieving their potential and will, therefore, require different solutions and support targeted towards meeting each of their individual needs. In addition, learners may belong to several of the above groups at the same time, depending on their individual circumstances. *The list of groups is not exhaustive.* Learners not in these groups may be considered vulnerable or disadvantaged, including specifically as a result of COVID-19. For example, some learners who would not have been considered vulnerable or disadvantaged pre-COVID-19 may require additional support because of their experience during lockdown.

Learners educated through the medium of Welsh from homes where Welsh is not spoken may also require additional support, especially where they also face other barriers to learning. This may also be the case for those learners where English or Welsh is not their first language.

The role of the LA is to ensure that schools and providers are supported to identify the vulnerable learners in a broader context, and that there are clear links for support for schools from EAS and LA officers. It is often the most vulnerable learners for whom education other than at school (EOTAS) is considered. The LA has a clear EOTAS Policy which aligns with the principles outlined in this strategy.

Additional Learning Needs (ALN)

The LA has an ALN Policy which defines Blaenau Gwent's Local Authority's (LAs) approach, objectives and plans (within the context of current legislative changes) to support schools to meet the needs of children with additional learning needs (ALN) to overcome barriers and challenges to enable them to reach their full potential. The principles underpinning the additional learning needs system are to support the creation of a fully inclusive, person-centred education system where all learners are given the opportunity to succeed and have access to an education that meets their needs and enable them to participate in, benefit from, and enjoy learning.

Children Looked After (CLA)

The LA has a policy for children looked after (CLA), which outlines the LA approach, supports the development of schools' policies, implementation and monitoring of a consistent approach, working in partnership with children's services and the EAS.

c) Wellbeing

There has been significant focus from Welsh Government, Public Health Wales and Estyn for a number of years on ensuring a collective focus on improving children's wellbeing. Locally, in Blaenau Gwent, there is a significant focus on children's wellbeing and mental health, particularly in relation to the Whole School Approach (WSA), early help and enhanced support, CAMHS in-reach project and EAS strategy for wellbeing and equity. Blaenau Gwent makes a significant contribution to the WSA agenda at both a national and regional level.

The LA has a Wellbeing Strategy and Good Practice Guide, which defines Blaenau Gwent's Local Authority's (LAs) approach, objectives and plans (within the context of current legislative changes) to support schools to support learners' well-being and mental health. The Blaenau Gwent aspiration for well-being is that all children and young people are purposefully engaged in education which is appropriate to their needs and age. We want our children and young people to flourish and achieve positive outcomes for themselves, their families and our community. We want our children and young people to be healthy, confident, capable and independent as far as possible and ready to learn throughout their lives. We want our children and young people to be enterprising, creative contributors who are ready to play a full part in life and work.

The Wellbeing Strategy and Good Practice Guide recognises the multi-dimensional nature of well-being and the critical importance of promoting good well-being for all. The mechanism for achieving this will be through the co-ordination of the curriculum in schools and how extra and co-curricular activities can be designed to enhance and complement learning experiences to improve well-being. This strategy aims to establish a framework where it is possible to map how aspects of learner well-being are explicitly promoted through the curriculum and how the community, outside agencies and partners can help augment school provision to provide comprehensive and meaningful experiences to promote well-being.

Schools and other education settings should strive to have an inclusive culture that fosters schools' ability to provide protective factors that develop resilience and promote wellbeing. The LA, working together with partners, aims to support schools to develop a coherent whole school approach to wellbeing, focusing on the Welsh Government 'whole school approach' and to develop a coherent whole education approach to wellbeing across a range of dimensions. These aims are consistent with the recommendations outlined in Estyn's (2019) report: Healthy and happy: school impact on pupils' health and wellbeing and with the 'Mind Over Matter' (2018) report.

d) Behaviour / Relationships

The Local Authority has recently produced a draft version of the 'Promoting Positive Relationships and Behaviours Policy and Guidance' document, to support schools in promoting inclusion and preventing exclusion amongst its community.

In addition, there is a range of policy and guidance documentation from the Welsh Government including:

- [Welsh Government Inclusion & Pupil Support Document](#)
- [Exclusion from schools and pupil referral units 225/2019](#)
- [Practical approaches to behaviour management in the classroom. A handbook for classroom teachers in primary schools 117/2012](#)
- [Practical approaches to behaviour management in the classroom. A handbook for classroom teachers in secondary schools 086/2010](#)
- [Effective managed moves: A fresh start at school for children and young people 096/2011](#)

- [Rights, respect, equality: Statutory guidance for governing bodies of maintained schools 2019](#)
- The Children Act 1989 and The Social Services and Wellbeing act (2014),
- Curriculum for Wales 2022 and
- Challenging Bullying: Rights, Respect Equality statutory guidance (2019)

e) Exclusions

Our vision is for all children and young people in Blaenau Gwent is to be purposefully engaged in an educational programme appropriate to their needs and age. We want our children and young people to flourish and to achieve positive outcomes for themselves, their families, and our community and for society at large. We want our children and our adults to be happy, healthy, capable and engaged with school and the wider community. Minimal school exclusions will be a key indicator of our collective success.

Welsh Government recognises and promotes the importance of wellbeing in schools as a key factor in achieving this ambition. Blaenau Gwent is aware that improving the all-round wellbeing of pupils and staff is important in and of itself, as well as crucial in lifting performance and attainment levels.

In most cases, fixed-term exclusions are only given after exhausting all the available options for internal interventions and exclusions from the classroom. However, research demonstrates the clear need to consider what additional external support can be provided to children to prevent exclusion when internal school-based interventions do not succeed.

The Local Authority has produced a guidance document to support schools in promoting inclusion and preventing exclusion amongst its community. There are regular exclusion monitoring arrangements in place e.g., DLT (Directorate Leadership Team) and school levels.

f) Roles and Responsibilities

The Education Directorate and Inclusion Service, in collaboration with the Education Achievement Service (EAS) and local and regional partnerships, will:

- provide leadership to promote successful inclusion in schools, early years, youth and adult learning settings and have regard to stakeholder views;
- develop strategies and policies that are inclusive and non-discriminatory;
- monitor educational outcomes of vulnerable groups and target resources appropriately and transparently aim to challenge and monitor outcomes, provision and the quality of leadership in order to secure the best possible quality of education for vulnerable groups;
- promote effective and coordinated transition for children and young people between phases and settings;
- celebrate and disseminate good practice that has been identified across LA.

Schools and other educational settings will:

- develop an organisational culture and ethos that is inclusive, non-discriminatory and responds to diversity;
- personalise learning so that all children and young people achieve and reach their full potential;
- celebrate and publicise the achievements of all learners;
- monitor educational outcomes for all potentially vulnerable groups work to remove barriers and build bridges for inclusion;
- work with local communities to promote inclusion and continued access to education and lifelong learning.

Partnerships

Working in partnership is a key priority for the LA. Effective collaboration will be secured through active involvement with:

- the Wellbeing Partnership.
- Multi-agency forums with Children's Services and Health;
- voluntary organisations and other key stakeholders;
- schools and other educational settings;
- children, young people, parents and carers.

Learner Voice

The LA recognises the importance that all agencies involved in the education and support of children and young people should seek their views. Their views will be sought through relevant person centred practice reviews and pupil participation forums and taken into consideration when decisions about their educational experience are made.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

The Inclusion Strategy will be reviewed annually. The LA will monitor progress towards inclusive practice both at school and other educational settings through:

- Reviewing performance indicators at local and national level on a regular basis;
- Analysis and effective use of relevant data at a corporate, directorate and school level;
- Education and EAS Officer visits and reports;
- Estyn inspection findings and independent reviews;
- The range of self-evaluation processes.