

Committee: **Cabinet**
Date of meeting: **29th November, 2023**
Report Subject: **Update on Progress Against Estyn Recommendations**
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr. Sue Edmunds, Cabinet Member People and Education**
Report Submitted by: **Luisa Munro-Morris, Interim Corporate Director of Education**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
19.10.23	19.10.23	08.11.23			13.11.23	29.11.23		

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update members on the Education Directorate's progress against the Estyn Local Government Education Services (LGES) Inspection; the full report is attached as (Appendix 1).

2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 The provision of Education is regulated under the Estyn Local Government Education Services (LGES) framework. The Local Authority was inspected between 28th November and 2nd December and the report was published February 2023. The outcome of the Inspection is positive overall, progress since the last inspection has been made and there is no requirement for follow-up activity. The inspectorate identified 3 recommendations for improvement, and the local authority will use these recommendations to update its improvement plans.
 - 2.2 The recommendations are:
 - R1.** Improve the corporate leadership of education services,
 - R2.** Improve the quality of self-evaluation, strategic planning and performance management; and,
 - R3.** Accelerate improvements in provision for secondary age pupils in schools causing concern.
 - 2.3 In addition to the three recommendations, key areas for improvement have been identified within the body of the Estyn Report. These will be addressed alongside the 3 recommendations.
 - 2.4 This report is the second update reporting on progress against the 3 recommendations to Members.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

- 3.1 The report has been considered by Education's DMT and CLT.
- 3.2 This report will also be considered by the People Scrutiny Committee on 13th November 2023, and any feedback will be provided verbally to Cabinet.

3.3 **Option 1**

For Members to consider the action plan in response to Estyn's recommendations and the structure of the revised Self-evaluation Report and make any specific recommendations.

Option 2

Accept the report as provided.

4. **Evidence of how this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

It is a statutory responsibility of the Corporate Director of Education to assess the effectiveness of the delivery of Education and regular monitoring reports will be produced, in line with the Scrutiny and Cabinet Forward Work Programmes.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

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

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

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

5.3 ***Legal***

Estyn were established under the Education Act 1992. They are independent of the Welsh Parliament but funded by the Welsh Government (under Section 104 of the Government of Wales Act 1998). Under the Education Act 2005 the Chief Inspector has a duty to keep the Welsh Parliament informed about the quality of the education in schools.

Inspections of LGES are carried out under Section 38 of the Education Act 1997 which provides that Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales (HMCI) 'may, and, if requested to do so by the Secretary of State, shall, arrange for any local authority to be inspected'. Such an inspection 'shall consist of a review of the way in which the authority are performing any function which relates to the provision of education for (a) persons of compulsory school age (whether at school or otherwise) or (b) for persons of any age above or below that age who are registered as pupils at schools maintained by the authority'. Other aspects of local authority provision are subject to inspection under a range of legislation, including the functions conferred on them under sections 25 and 26 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000 relating to education, training or youth support services (within the meaning of section 123 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000).

The Children Act 2004 introduces a duty on local authorities and their partners to co-operate to improve the well-being of children. As far as local authorities are concerned, the inspectorate is given the powers to review a local authority's functions relating to Section 51 of the Act, namely in co-operating to improve well-being and producing children and young people's plans where these functions relate to education, training or youth support services Section 51 of The Children Act 2004 changes the Education Act 1997 so that 'An inspection of a local education authority in Wales under this section shall consist of a review of the way in which the authority are performing any function conferred on them in their capacity as a local education authority; and the functions conferred on them under sections 25 and 26 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000 relating to education, training or youth support service

5.4 **Human Resources**

The Education Directorate are currently undertaking a review of the directorate to ensure that it has the capacity to deliver on the Estyn recommendations.

5.5 **Health and Safety**

The updated Business Plans include key actions from improving safeguarding procedures and policies across schools.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

6.1.1 **Local Authority Link Inspection Visits**

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

There have been two LALI visit post inspection, and in each visit a range of evidence was presented to demonstrate progress towards the 3 recommendations.

6.1.2 **Business Planning**

The Education Directorate has revised its business plans (improvement plan) to incorporate the 3 recommendations at both a strategic and an operational level. The Education Directorate has 3 levels of planning and the priorities and actions at each level have been reviewed to ensure that they address both Corporate Priorities and priorities identified through self-evaluation.

The new Priorities are attached as (Appendix 2).

Progress on relevant actions within the business plan are reviewed on a quarterly basis, in line with other actions, and progress is also reported to Estyn via the LALI meetings on a termly basis.

6.1.3 **Self-evaluation Report**

Estyn identified in their report that overall the quality of self-evaluation is not strong enough. In response to this, the Education Directorate have revised the self-evaluation cycle (Appendix 3).

The structure of the self-evaluation report has also been restructured so that it reports directly against each of the 5 Corporate Education Priorities. There is a clear focus on progress against the priority, impact and next steps. There is also a section to identify and evidence progress against the 3 recommendations.

6.1.4 **Performance Management**

Estyn identified that the LA has suitable performance management processes in place where officers have access to monthly support sessions and regularly review progress against targets. However, they also identified that targets are not consistently precise enough and do not always identify the specific aspects of practice that officers need to improve which means that performance management processes are not aligned consistently with evaluation and improvement work. As a consequence, a review of performance management processes in the Education Directorate has been undertaken and the following changes/actions are in place:

- Performance management targets now link to the Business Plan priorities that the member of staff is working towards
- Performance management focuses on both support and accountability, as previously there was too much of a focus on support
- All members of the Education leadership team are undertaking a coaching and mentoring qualification. This will be used to further develop performance management processes.

6.1.5 **Education Directorate Vision**

Estyn commented that the vision was not clear enough and therefore was not widely understood by key stakeholders. Consequently, a review of the Education Directorate vision is currently underway. As part of this review it was identified that the current vision does not capture all aspects of the Education Directorate portfolio and consequently when the vision was

reviewed ensuring all areas of the Education Directorate were reflected was a key consideration.

The Education Directorate have developed a draft vision and 'How Statements' to explain how the Education Directorate will achieve the vision (Appendix 4).

A consultation process with key stakeholders has now commenced.

6.1.6 **Progress against Recommendation 3**

Estyn's third recommendation require the LA to accelerate improvements in provision for secondary age pupils in schools causing concern. The LA currently has two schools who are formally categorised as causing concern, Brynmawr Foundation School and the River Centre. The Improving School Report details progress against this recommendation.

6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

It is essential that the Education Directorate address the 3 recommendations to ensure that they can provide services for the children, young people and the community, that are fit for purpose.

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

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

A consultation exercise on the draft vision and 'how statements' has also started.

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

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

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

If the Education Directorate does not act on the recommendations in the Estyn report in an appropriate way, and can not feedback progress in the termly Local Inspection meetings, there is a risk that the Local Authority will be placed in a category.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

The LA is working in collaboration with the EAS commissioned service to support the two schools who are in a category.

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

The LA commissions its school improvement function on a regional basis.

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

There are no implications arising from this report.

6.9 ***Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)***

There are no implications arising from this report.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

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

Background Documents /Electronic Links

[Appendix 1 – Blaenau Gwent LGES Inspection](#)

[Appendix 2 – Overview of Education Directorate Business Plans](#)

[Appendix 3 – New self-evaluation cycle](#)

[Appendix 4 – Draft vision and how to statements](#)