

Committee: **Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee**  
Date of meeting: **6<sup>th</sup> November 2019**  
Report Subject: **Management of Pupil Places and the School Estate 2018/19**  
Portfolio Holder: **Councillor J Collins, Executive Member Education**  
Report Submitted by: **Claire Gardner, Education Transformation Manager**

Reporting Pathway (Dates to be Entered)								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
	15.10.19	28.10.19			06.11.19	18.12.19		

**1. Purpose of the Report**

1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Scrutiny Committee with the opportunity to scrutinise the management of pupil places focussing on both processes and outcomes.

**2. Scope and Background**

**2.1 The Planning of School Places Legislative and Policy Context: Pupil Place Management**

Councils have a duty to manage, monitor, review and plan pupil places on an annual basis, in line with Welsh Government Legislation.

**2.2 Local Context: Pupil Place Management, Capacities, Projections, Surplus and Sufficiency**

Capacity calculations were determined for each of the schools in October 2018, which informed the final admission numbers for the Blaenau Gwent School Admissions Policy 2020/21.

2.3 Councils are required annually to provide an assessment of surplus and/or sufficiency issues at primary schools for a 5-year period and a 7-year period for secondary schools.

2.4 Pupil projection accuracy has improved over the last 3 years, with 100% of primary and 98% of secondary projections confirmed to be accurate during the 2018/19 and 2017/18 academic sessions; in comparison to 97% for primary 94% for secondary during the 2016/17 academic session.

2.5 Between January 2018 and January 2019 the percentage of surplus places within primary has further decreased from 14% to 11%; with the 19% in January 2018 being maintained into January 2019 for secondary. The sustained higher number of surplus places at secondary, is attributable to the birth rate for the year 7 cohort (2006/2007 births), along with secondary pupil population remaining stable throughout the academic year, with no positive trend noted in either outward or inward migration. Surplus places in both the

primary and secondary sector are projected to decrease further over the next 2 years, taking the primary percentage to 9% and secondary to 11%, by the 2022/23 academic year – with the overall combined projected status as 10%.

- 2.6 Live birth rates have fluctuated over the last ten years, with a downward trend noted between 2012 and 2019 (**Appendix 1**). However, there has been an upward trend in inward migration over the last academic session, with approximately 215 pupils – 168 of which were primary pupils, moving into Blaenau Gwent between September 2018 and August 2019 and requesting a school place via in-year transfer.
- 2.7 The School Organisation Policy (2017) sets a target of reducing surplus places to 15% by 2020 by which time the primary sector is projected to have 10% and the secondary sector 15% surplus places. The Education Transformation team targeted the following schools whereby the percentage was over 15%, during the 2018/19 academic session:
- Coed y Garn Primary School – Admission number reduced from 270 to 246 resulting in the surplus % reducing from 24% in 2017/18 to 20% in 2018/19
  - Sofrydd Primary School – Admission number reduced from 174 to 162 resulting in the surplus % reducing from 18% in 2017/18 to 13% in 2018/19
  - Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg – Admission number reduced from 360 to 258 resulting in the surplus % reducing from 41% in 2017/18 to 17% in 2018/19
- 2.8 The Education Transformation team's strategy for the 2019/20 academic session is to work on the development of surplus places reduction action plans with the following schools who are projected (as at January 2019) to have over 15% surplus between 2020 and 2023:
- St Illtyd's Primary School currently have 8% surplus in 2018/19 but projected to rise to 23% in 2023/24
  - St Marys Roman Catholic Primary School currently have 0% surplus in 2018/19 but projected to rise to 23% in 2023/24
  - Cwm Primary School currently have 20% surplus in 2018/19 but projected to rise to 32% in 2023/24
  - Deighton Primary School currently have 22% surplus in 2018/19 but projected to rise to 25% in 2021/22
- 2.9 There are a relatively small number of schools which are projected to have sufficiency issues between 2021-2025 as follows:
- Glyncoed
  - Coed y Garn Primary School
  - Abertillery Learning Community Secondary Campus
- 2.10 All of which will be addressed via the annual assessment of school capacity.

- 2.11 Over the last academic session the team has submitted the following Section 106 requests for developer contributions, in-line with securing increased capacity in schools within the development area:
- Ebbw Fawr Valley – 5 for primary provision
  - Tredegar Sirhowy Valley – 1 for primary provision

2.12 **Condition and Suitability**

The 2018/19 position for school building condition and suitability continues to improve. Condition and suitability assessment criteria range from A (good) - D (bad). Blaenau Gwent has only 1 school categorised as 'D' for condition. Figure 1 (on page 6) highlights the latest position in respect of the Blaenau Gwent school estate.

The condition and suitability programme for the 2019/20 academic session, will be planned for implementation from January 2020. This will also inform the prioritisation of projects within Band B and C of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme, along with potential further school organisation priorities, minor and planned works programmes etc.

The Council is reviewing the criteria and methodology linked to suitability assessments and will commence implementation of the revised procedures in January 2020. There is only one school building categorised as a 'D' (Glyncoed Primary School) within the school estate.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 **Option 1:** Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee considers and accepts the report.

3.2 **Option 2:** Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee considers the report and provides comments relating to improvements that can be made to the current monitoring processes.

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

4.1 Education is a priority in the Council's Corporate Plan of which the planning of school places and management of the school estate are essential components. In addition, facilities management contributes to the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The Council has statutory duties and responsibilities in line with the planning of school places and the management of the school Estate

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

Welsh Government has indicated that there will be a further Schools Capital Maintenance Grant allocated to Local Authorities in 2019/20 financial year. The Education Minor Works budget is monitored, with planning already underway for the 2019/20 academic session.

## 5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

The Council has a statutory duty to comply with Welsh Government legislation and policy as detailed above. The primary risks and mitigating actions are as follows:

- Sustainability issues within the school estate – this is managed and mitigated against in line with capacity assessments, projections, condition and suitability reviews, along with the delivery of minor and planned works programmes and school organisation.
- Ineffective distribution of pupil places and/ or insufficient places to meet demand – this managed, mitigated and informed by the capacity assessment process and pupil projections, in conjunction with the admissions process.
- Compliance with statutory duty and legislative obligations - this is managed in line with policy and guidance review and development on an annual basis; along with facilities (including minor works and maintenance), health and safety and FRA monitoring and review, which is undertaken on a monthly basis.

## 5.3 ***Legal***

There are no direct legal implications associated with this report.

## 5.4 ***Human Resources***

There are no direct human resource implications associated with this report.

## 6. **Supporting Evidence:**

### 6.1.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

Between the 2017/18 and 2018/19 academic sessions there has been a considerable reduction in surplus places within the primary sector. The secondary sector has fluctuated in line with transfers out of borough in particular. The secondary sector has remained below 20% surplus places for the last 2 years

6.1.2 Surplus places are set to decrease further to within and below target over the next 5 years (Please refer to the graph and percentages detailed within **Appendix 2**, along with **Appendix 3** for pupil projection data as at January 2019).

### 6.1.3 **All Wales Position**

The January 2017/18 surplus places comparative data for Wales (the Council is presently awaiting 2018/19 data, which is scheduled for distribution in early 2020), demonstrated Blaenau Gwent's position was:

- 19<sup>th</sup> (out of 22 Local Authorities) for primary;
- 8<sup>th</sup> (out of 22) for secondary; and,
- 14<sup>th</sup> (out of 22 Local Authorities) in terms of the combined primary and secondary position.

6.1.4 The January 2017/18 surplus places comparative data for Wales (Please refer to **Appendix 4** All Wales Primary and Secondary Data; All Wales

Primary Data, and All Wales Secondary Data - for more information).

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

The management of pupil places aims to secure continued access to education places in Blaenau Gwent for current and future pupil populations.

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

A schools engagement programme, which considers the needs of current and prospective pupils, staff etc. is in place i.e. school facilities action planning sessions, capacity review sessions, medical needs and accessibility reviews etc.

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

The planning of pupil places and management of the school estate takes account of short, medium and long-term planning arrangements. informing:

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

Management of pupil places and the school estate is focused on early identification and planning, in order to secure a school estate that is fit for purpose that contributes to raising educational standards, which is a Council priority.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

Key management and operational staff across the Council and school estate, are involved in detailed annual reviews of facilities and pupil places

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

The process is cross-cutting in the sense that it impacts upon Education, Schools, Estates, Planning and Building Control, Community Services, and Social Services etc.; therefore, service area involvement is key to effective implementation.

6.8 ***EqIA (screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed)***

Equality impact assessments are continuously carried out in line with both the management of pupil places and the school estate.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

Education review and monitor both the planning of school places and management of school estate processes and outcomes consistently throughout each academic year, incorporating learning from the previous year.

**Background Documents / Electronic Links**

Appendix 1 - Live Birth Graph

Appendix 2 – Surplus Reduction Graph

Appendix 3 – January 2019 Pupil Projection Data

Appendix 4 – All Wales Primary and Secondary Data