

Committee: **Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **4th December 2019**

Report Subject: **Improving Schools Programme 2019**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr J Collins, Executive Member for Education**

Report Submitted by: **Michelle Jones, Strategic Education Improvement Manager**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
14.11.19	19.11.19	20.11.19			04.12.19	18.12.19		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide elected members with an overview of those schools, over the last 3 years that have presented as a cause for concern, their progress and the work delivered or currently underway to continue to support them to improve.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The report covers all schools and settings within the County Borough identified by the Education Directorate, supported by the, EAS and/or Estyn as needing to improve.
- 2.2 The Blaenau Gwent Improving Schools Programme operates within the regional arrangements for supporting schools across South East Wales, and aligns with the regional policies and processes for school monitoring, evaluation, support and intervention. The regional arrangements build on the national frameworks and guidance and in particular the National Framework for Categorising Schools and the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013. The background to categorisation is explained further in Appendix 1.
- 2.3 The Blaenau Gwent Improving Schools Programme focuses particularly on those schools which need to secure improvement in schools categorised as Amber and Red.

3. Options for Recommendation

3.1 Option 1

Members are asked to scrutinise the information detailed within the report and contribute to the continuous assessment of effectiveness by making appropriate recommendations to the Executive Committee.

3.2 **Option 2**

Accept the report as provided.

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

4.1 **Corporate Plan**

• **Education Aims**

- “To improve pupil outcomes, progress and wellbeing, particularly for our more-able and most vulnerable learners
- To improve the quality of our education services and our school buildings to help learners achieve great outcomes
- To continue to support our school leaders to help our pupils achieve their ambitions.”

4.2 **Statutory Responsibility**

The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 consolidates, clarifies and reforms the law in relation to intervention in schools causing concern. The Welsh Government’s statutory guidance for schools causing concern (February 2014) details the local authority powers of intervention in schools causing concern, the grounds on which those powers can be invoked and the procedures governing the intervention process. A further explanation of this is explained further in Appendix 1, which includes the LA powers of intervention.

4.3 **Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan Objectives**

One of the objectives in the Blaenau Gwent Wellbeing Plan aims for every child to have the best start in life. Through our Education provision we seek to ensure that provision is appropriate and able to meet the needs of children and young people so that their progress and performance is as good as it ought to be.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 **Impact on Budget**

There are no direct financial implications for this report. However, the Council allocates approximately £42.8 million to schools via the Individual Schools Budget (ISB) to provide high quality education and to improve pupil outcomes.

- 5.1.1 Blaenau Gwent continues to make a financial contribution to the regional EAS arrangements of approximately £364,000 from the core Education Directorate Budget. The EAS is the Council’s commissioned school improvement service commissioned to work directly with schools to provide professional challenge and support to improve. The Education Directorate holds the EAS to account for the impact and effectiveness of their work in schools in Blaenau Gwent.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

Risk is associated with underperformance and ineffective processes to improve performance and progress in identified schools. Failure to raise standards is identified as a key risk to the Council, both in terms of reputation and pupil life chances. This is reflected in the Education Directorate and EAS risk registers.

5.2.1 Mitigating actions include the routine monitoring of quantitative and qualitative information, regular quality assurance meetings between the Council and the EAS, regular quality assurance meetings within the Education Directorate and across teams, school inspection findings and school categorisation results.

5.2.2 The progress schools make in their School Development Plans is monitored on a half- termly basis. School attendance and exclusion figures are monitored on a fortnightly basis. School's safeguarding processes are also closely monitored.

5.2.3 Holistic support packages are devised via regular intra Council services meetings between OD, finance, health and safety, education and school governor support services.

5.2.4 Through ongoing robust self-evaluation processes school level performance data is regularly analysed and evaluated to identify emerging trends or possible underperformance.

5.2.5 The quality of provision i.e. the quality teaching and learning in classrooms is monitored and supported via the EAS. The quality of school leadership is also supported extensively by the EAS via a range of programmes and school-to-school networks.

5.3 ***Legal***

The improving schools programme operates within the legal framework of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

There is no direct staffing or workforce implications arising from this report.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

6.1.1 **School Categorisation**

All schools are categorised on an annual basis in accordance with the National Model for Categorisation. The process takes place at a regional level and for the last 3 years national moderation has confirmed that the regional process is robust. Appendix 1 shows the significant reduction in the level of support that Blaenau Gwent Schools require for the period 2017 to 2019.

6.1.2 **Schools in the Red and Amber Categories, that have made positive progress (2017 to 2019)**

Appendix 1 details the progress of the following schools, Ebbw Fawr Learning Community (Red to Yellow), St Joseph's RC Primary (Amber to Yellow), St Mary's RC Primary Yellow (in year) to Amber to Yellow), Rhos-y-Fedwen (Yellow Amber (in year) to Amber).

6.1.3 **Schools who are in receipt of additional support 2018 to 2019**

Appendix 1 details the additional support that is now provided for Brynbach Primary School (Yellow to Amber).

6.1.4 **Schools in Receipt of a Statutory Warning Notice (Red)**

Appendix 1 details the arrangement and progress for the two schools; Abertillery Learning Community and Brynmawr Foundation School, both of which are in receipt of a statutory warning notice to improve from the Council.

6.3 ***Expected outcome for the public***

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

The regional policy for monitoring, evaluation and intervention in schools through the categorisation process is derived from the National Categorisation Framework, but has been evolved through the engagement of a variety of stakeholders including schools and members of governing bodies.

A range of Council departments and external partners are involved in delivering programmes to support schools requiring improvement. Monitoring progress towards targets enables effective targeting of support.

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

Analysis of aggregate school performance data is a key element in ensuring that schools are known well by the Council so that appropriate support and intervention can be directed towards areas of greatest need.

Monitoring of school performance facilitates support for schools to ensure that schools maintain high quality outcomes in the longer term.

6.3.3 ***Preventative focus***

Through effective monitoring and evaluation of school performance, early identification of emerging areas for improvement can be achieved with consequent early intervention to secure improvement.

The effectiveness of the Council's monitoring, evaluation and intervention programmes ensure that preventative action is taken early in order to minimise the escalation of concerns.

6.3.4 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

The Council collaborates with neighbouring local authorities through the South East Wales Consortium for the provision of School Improvement services through the Education Achievement Service (EAS).

The Council also secures a range of pupil support services such as Hearing Impaired, Visually Impaired, Speech and Language, and Ethnic Minority support services through regional collaboration.

Within the Council, the school improvement and inclusion leadership teams ensure that there is a coordinated approach to supporting schools in the Education Directorate and across the Council as a whole.

6.3.5 ***Integration(across service areas)***

The Council commissions its school improvement function on regional basis.

6.4 ***EqlA (screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed)***

There is no requirement for EQIA assessment since this is not a change of policy or practice. However, implementation of the council's monitoring, evaluation and intervention practice in schools has a positive impact on children and young people and on staff within a particular school. By improving the quality of education, standards are improved for all children and young people. Through the Council's school improvement strategy, particular focus is given to vulnerable learners and those who are at risk of underachievement.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 Monitoring of improvement pathways is an important mechanism for ensuring that members of the Education Scrutiny Committee and the Executive are sufficiently informed to enable them to hold the authority to account effectively for the quality of education provision and hence pupil outcomes.

8. **Background Documents / Electronic Links**

Appendix 1 – Improving Schools