

Committee: **Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee**  
Date of meeting: **26<sup>th</sup> February 2020**  
Report Subject: **Blaenau Gwent Education Services DRAFT Self – Evaluation Findings**  
  
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Joanne Collins, Executive Member for Education**  
Report Submitted by: **Lynette Jones, Corporate Director of Education**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
√	13.02.20	14.02.20			26.02.20	11.03.20		

## 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide members with opportunity to scrutinise the findings of ongoing self-evaluation processes undertaken in the Education Directorate, with partners and across the Council. Findings inform our evaluations of progress against our key improvement priorities, which will be the subject of a further, separate report.
- 1.2 This report looks at the emerging findings against the inspection framework for Local Government Education Services (LGES) which will inform evaluations of progress against the key improvement priorities set out in business improvement plans.
- 1.3 A separate report will evaluate the extent of progress against the improvement objectives as set out in the Education Directorate's Business Improvement Plan and the Council's Corporate Plan.

## 2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The report provides a high-level narrative and appended presentation, which sets out the emerging findings of self-evaluation. A detailed, evaluative narrative, identifying areas where good progress has been made and where ongoing further improvement is required, is available on request.
- 2.2 Findings from self-evaluation are reflected as actions for improvement in the Directorate's Business Improvement Plans at Directorate, Service and Team level. Effective self-evaluation means that the Directorate remains focussed on improving the right things.
- 2.3 A comprehensive data set of school performance, coupled with evaluations of impact and effectiveness of Council based and brokered support feeds into the overall evaluation.

- 2.4 A comprehensive self-evaluation process helps identify those areas where progress has been made and where further improvement is required. Emerging findings, via ongoing self-evaluation is captured every October and March, as well as via quarterly performance and finance reporting mechanisms.
- 2.5 The findings of self-evaluation are captured in degrees of detail, from most detailed to high-level points only. However, it is the high-level points only, which are presented in this report.

### 3. **Options for Recommendation**

- 3.1 This report has been approved by Education DMT and CLT prior to submission to Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee.

**Option 1:** to accept the report as presented.

**Option 2:** members are requested 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 This report provides the Committee with important and statutory performance monitoring information, as well as opportunity to identify where progress has been made and where further improvement is required.

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

#### 4.1 **Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

One of the objectives in the Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan aims for every child to have the best start in life. Through effective self-evaluation and improvement planning processes, 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 (short and long term impact)***

- 5.1.1 The Council allocates approximately £42.8 million (2019/20) to schools via the Individual Schools Budget (ISB) to provide high quality education and to improve pupil outcomes.
- 5.1.2 The Council's total gross budgeted expenditure per pupil for 2019/20 was £6,372 which is the 3rd highest in Wales and £523 above the Welsh average of £5,849.

- 5.1.3 For 2019/20 the funding delegated to schools was 85.7% which is above the all Wales average and ranked 1st when compared to the family of schools. (Local Authority Budgeted Expenditure on Schools 2019/20). The Education Directorate has an improving position on a 'value for money' basis, in that school categorisation has improved significantly and the overall central funding has reduced, in line with public sector austerity measures.
- 5.1.4 The Council commissions the Education Achievement Service (EAS) to deliver the statutory functions of school improvement. The annual financial costs being £364K which has reduced by 2% over the last 3 years (for example £371 FY 18/19, £21K over 3 years). Schools categorisation profile has improved over the last 5 years against a backdrop of decreasing financial contributions to the EAS: this therefore, effectively represents good value for money.
- 5.1.5 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***

- 5.2.1 Risk is associated with weak self-evaluation which fails to accurately identify those areas where good progress has been made and where further improvement is needed. Strong self-evaluation helps services target resources at greatest need and hence bring about improvement precisely where it is needed.
- 5.2.2 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.
- 5.2.3 Mitigating actions include:
- strong self-evaluation processes which accurately identify those areas which need to improve the most;
  - 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;
  - the progress schools make towards targets is also monitored on a termly basis. School attendance and exclusion figures are monitored on a fortnightly basis. School's safeguarding processes are also closely monitored.
- 5.2.4 Holistic support packages are devised via regular intra Council services meetings between OD, finance, health and safety, education and school governor support services. School level performance data is regularly analysed and evaluated to identify emerging trends.

- 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***

This report provides information about statutory, end of Key Stage school performance underpinned by processes set out in the National Model for regional working and School Improvement. The School Standards and Organisation Act Wales (2013) support strategic and operational activity to improve pupil outcomes.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

None for this report.

6. **Performance Information**

6.1 **Performance**

**Areas where good progress has been made:**

- School inspection and school categorisation profile has improved significantly with no Primary schools in follow up, and excellent practice identified in a number of schools;
- GCSE L2 English and Capped 9 improved;
- GCSE A\*/A grades improved in English and Maths;
- A-level A-C grades were greater than all-Wales means;
- Value-added progress in English and Maths, reading and numeracy for our 7 and 11 year olds have improved;
- 11-year-old boys made better progress in reading;
- The Reach of the Youth Service exceeded that of the all-Wales means;
- Primary persistent absenteeism reduced to below that of the all-Wales means;
- The School Based Counselling Service provides good support;
- Permanent exclusions reduced;
- Good progress through the 21<sup>st</sup> Century schools programme;
- The Headteacher Induction and support programme was very well received by aspiring and new Headteachers;
- The Staff wellbeing survey was good; and
- The EAS provide good value for money.

6.2 **Areas where further improvement is required:**

- Higher levels of language acquisition in our very young children in the Early Years;
- Improved attainment of eFSM pupils and particularly our More Able pupils in the Early Years and throughout education;
- Improve school attendance;
- Progress between Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 and attainment at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 in English and Maths;
- Provision for pupils with additional learning needs;
- Reduction in NEETs; and
- Reduce school exclusions and parents/carers who opt to EHE.

The Council will continue to work with partners across the Council, for example, children's services, regeneration, legal, finance and organisational development to focus the work on improving pupil outcomes and supporting school leaders. The Council will also continue to work across the Greater Gwent Partnership namely the Education Achievement Service (EAS) to support our school leaders to improve pupil outcomes and wellbeing.

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

The Directorate's self-evaluation processes are aligned with LGES and the regional policy for monitoring, supporting, evaluation and intervention in schools through the categorisation process is derived from the National Categorisation Framework.

A range of Council departments and external partners are involved in delivering programmes to support schools requiring improvement. Monitoring progress enables effective targeting of support. The Education Directorate's senior officers, alongside Inclusion officers and officers in OD and Finance provide valuable advice and support for schools. They work in very close partnership with the EAS to design and implement effective support packages for schools presenting as a cause for concern. All of the above are also engaged and contribute to the Council's self-evaluation processes.

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

Analysis of individual 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. Effective self-evaluation processes ensure that resources are targeted at greatest need and secure improvement in longer term. Monitoring of school performance facilitates support for schools to ensure that schools maintain high quality provision and hence improved pupil outcomes and wellbeing in the longer term.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

Through effective self-evaluation processes, support and monitoring of school performance, early identification of emerging areas for improvement can be identified with consequent early intervention to secure improvement. The effectiveness of the Council's monitoring, support, evaluation and intervention programmes ensure that preventative action is taken early in order to minimise the escalation of concerns.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

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

The Council also secures a range of pupil support services such as the regionally based support service for pupils with hearing and vision challenges as well as support to improve speech and language and support for our pupils of ethnic minority and those with English as an additional language.

Learning support is also in place to support achievement for our children who are looked after.

Within the Council, the school improvement and inclusion leadership teams ensure there is a coordinated approach to supporting schools across the County Borough as a whole.

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

Ensuring that schools deliver high quality education provision to secure high pupil outcomes and wellbeing relates directly to Council Improvement Objectives; that Children's and young people's learning is maximised and standards at Key Stage 4 are raised.

These overarching outcomes and objectives permeate the work of a range of Council departments and partners. Effective monitoring, support, evaluation and intervention are fundamental to the Council's wellbeing objectives as appended below.

**6.8     *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, support, 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 and wellbeing are improved for all children and young people.

**7.     *Monitoring Arrangements***

**7.1     Monitoring of the emerging findings of self-evaluation is an important mechanism for ensuring that members of the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee and the Executive are sufficiently informed to enable them to hold the Authority effectively to account for the quality of education provision and hence pupil outcomes and wellbeing. Well-established processes are in place to ensure that improvement plans are cognisant of emerging findings for improvement.**

**Background Documents /Electronic Links**

- Appendix 1 – High Level Summary