

Blaenau Gwent Education Directorate: emerging findings of self- evaluation. HIGH LEVEL SUMMARY January 2020

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Contextual Information

- NPT ranks 1 st in Wales followed by BG for eFSM acting as a proxy indicator for deprivation.
- In Wales, attainment over last 3 years at the end of Foundation Phase, KS 2 and KS 3 either declined or broadly stayed the same. This was mirrored in Blaenau Gwent except for English at L6 at Key Stage 3, which improved.
- In Blaenau Gwent School categorisation and inspection outcomes have improved over the last 4 years.



Secondary School Categorisation

Secondary School Categories 2018/19

- There are no national averages readily available for Step 1 and Step 2 data, and no Step 1 data was used for categorisation again this year.
- At the time of writing the regional comparative information for secondary settings shows that 53% of secondary schools across the region are categorised as red or amber compared to 50% in Blaenau Gwent.
- During the past three years, the proportion of schools in the green category has remained stable at Step 2 and Step 3.



Primary School Categorisation

Primary School Categories 2019/20

- There are no national averages readily available for Step 1 and Step 2 data, and no Step 1 data was used for categorisation again this year.
- However, during the past three years, the proportion of schools in the green category has increased for both Step 2 and 3, and is now 47% (compared to 43% for 2018/19 and from 32% for 2017 18).
- Similarly, the majority of primary schools (89%) are now categorised at both steps as either yellow or green with a greater proportion categorised as green than in 2017/18. This is in line with the regional performance of 89% for green / yellow schools.

1.1 Standards and progress overall - Areas where good progress has been made:

In the Foundation Phase: Almost two-thirds of schools improved LLCE results in 2019 while a similar proportion of schools exceeded their targets in MD.

Value-added (VA) Progress Foundation Phase to KS 2: (between the ages of 7 and 11 years old)

- pupils made good progress in English and Maths, also in reading and numeracy.
- boys made better progress than girls in reading and numeracy

eFSM Value-added (VA) Progress:

- eFSM mean progress (NC) was similar to that of non-FSM in KS 2 and KS 3 in English and Maths
- eFSM also made similar progress (NC) between KS 3 and 4 to that of non-FSM in English and Maths

In Key Stage 3:

- Level 5+ in writing, reading and oracy improved
- In 3 of the 4 secondary settings English, reading and writing at L6+ improved
- In 3 of the 4 settings Value-added progress in numeracy improved

1.1 Standards and Progress overall: Areas requiring improvement:

- Early language acquisition and attainment pre-school and in the Foundation Phase needs to improve
- Attainment of pupils entitled to Free School Meals needs to improve in all phases and Key Stages
- The quality of provision in Key Stages 2 and 3 for pupils with ALN at SA and SA+ levels need to improve
- Value-added progress for pupils across Key Stage 3 in English and Maths (at L5+ and L6+) needs to improve
- Attainment at GCSE in Maths and English in Key Stage 4 needs to improve
- Value-added progress for pupils in English and Maths as they move between Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 needs to improve - this includes pupils at The River Centre
- Pupil outcomes and progress in ALC and BFS need to improve
- Progress of children looked after during Key Stage 3 needs to improve
- Post-16 attainment at A*/A at A and AS level needs to improve as does completion rates
- NEETs need to reduce to below that of the all-Wales mean.

Pupil wellbeing: attendance and exclusions

- Primary school attendance has declined between 2016/17 and 2018/19 from 94.5% to 94.2%. However, at the end of 2017/18 there were a greater proportion of schools placed in Q1 and Q2. This places BG 3rd in the family of LAs.
- All Wales mean for Primary attendance stands at 94.6% in 18/19 (LA rank available in March 2020) BG Primary attendance is therefore 0.4pp below the all-Wales means.
- Primary: Unauthorised absence at the end of 2018/19 remained the same as in 2017/18 at 1.4% but still placed BG primary schools 2nd in its family of LAs and in line with the Welsh mean (1.4%).
- Primary: Persistent absenteeism in the primary sector has remained at 1.6% since 2015/16. (18/19 data is released in March). The all-Wales means stands at 1.7% BG remains 0.1% below this and ranks joint 1st in our family of LAs and joint 2nd in SEWC.

Pupil wellbeing: attendance and exclusions

- Secondary attendance, declined from 93.7% (16/17) to 92.9% (18/19). Based on the trend data over the 3-year period Blaenau Gwent is placed joint 3rd in our family of local authorities and 5th across the SEWC region. All-Wales means for secondary attendance is 93.8% which places BG 0.9pp lower than the all-Wales figures.
- Secondary unauthorised absence has increased from 1.5% (16/17) to 2.2% (18/19) and BG remains above national averages (1.7%).
- Persistent absenteeism in the secondary sector has increased from 3.4% to 4.1% since 2015/16, (18/19 data is released in March), which place places BG 1st in our family of local authorities and 2nd across the SEWC region. Despite the slight increase in persistent absenteeism, it is in line with the Welsh average of 4.1%.
- There has been a marginal reduction in pupils with below 80% attendance at the end of July 2019 compared to the end of July 2018. (747 in 2018/19 compared to 772 in 2017/18).

Pupil wellbeing: attendance and exclusions

- At the last point whereby comparative Council data was available (17/18), Blaenau Gwent ranked 13/22 for rates of 5-day exclusions or less, 4/5 in our family of LAs and 2/5 in South East Wales Consortia (SEWC). For rate of 6 days or more we were joint 6/22, 2/5 in our family of LAs and 2/5 in SEWC.
- KS3/4 data shows a 19% reduction in the number of exclusions in 2018/19 compared to the previous year and a 12.6% reduction in the number of days lost.
- Foundation Phase (FP)/KS2 data shows an increase in incidents of exclusion as well as a commensurate increase in the number of days lost.
- Data at FP/KS2 shows that a small number of schools account for 66% of exclusions and in those schools a significant proportion of the total relate to a small number of pupils (11).
- In 2017/18 more pupils in yr 7 were excluded than in any other year. In 2018/19 there has been a considerable reduction in yr7 exclusions.
- There were a total of three permanent exclusions in 2018/19 compared to nine in 2017/18 and 12 in 2016/17. Of these, all were in KS3/4.

1.3 Wellbeing and Attitudes to Learning: Areas where good progress has been made:

- Primary unauthorised absence at the end of 2018/19 remained the same as in 2017/18 at 1.4% but still placed BG primary schools its family of LAs and in line with the Welsh mean (1.4%).
- In Primary: persistent absenteeism in the primary sector has remained at 1.6% since 2015/16. (18/19 data is released in March). The Wales means stands at 1.7% BG remains 0.1% below this and ranks joint 1st in our family of LAs and joint 2nd in SEWC.
- In Secondary: persistent absenteeism in the secondary sector has increased from 3.4% to 4.1% since 2015/16, (18/19 data is released in March), which places BG 1st in our family of local authorities and 2nd across the SEWC region. Despite the slight increase in persistent absenteeism, it is in line with the Welsh average of 4.1%. 3 of the 4 secondary schools exceeded the WG modelled figure for attendance in 2017-18.
- All: there has been a marginal reduction in pupils with below 80% attendance at the end of July 2019 compared to the end of July 2018 (747 in 2018/19 compared to 772 in 2017/18).
- There are good, recent examples as reported in school inspection reports, where pupil voice is noted as being good for example, St Illtyd's Primary, St Joseph's RC Primary, BleanY Cwm Primary, St Mary's CIW.
- Inspection outcomes for care, support and guidance as well as for wellbeing are generally good in this area.

Wellbeing: where good progress has been made

- There are a good range of support programmes in place: Healthy Schools demonstrating exemplary work with schools in this area, good levels of participation in sport and events to seek views of CYP
- Effective Counselling service in place for 11 to 25 year olds.
- Exclusions: At the last point whereby comparative Council data was available (17/18), Blaenau Gwent was 13/22 for rates of 5-day exclusions or less, 4/5 in our family of LAs and 2/5 in South East Wales Consortium (SEWC). For rate of 6 days or more we were joint 6/22, 2/5 in our family of LAs and 2/5 in SEWC. KS3/4 data shows a 19% reduction in the number of exclusions in 2018/19 compared to the previous year and a 12.6% reduction in the number of days lost.
- In 2017/18 more pupils in Yr 7 were excluded than in any other year. In 2018/19 there has been a considerable reduction in Yr7 exclusions.
- There were a total of three permanent exclusions in 2018/19 compared to nine in 2017/18 and 12 in 2016/17. Of these, all were in KS3/4.
- BG has 71 EHE pupils, which is below the all-Wales mean of 121 per LA but need to reduce: 3rd lowest in our family of LAs. In BG 79% of families received a visit in the last 12 months compared with an average of 40% across Wales. There has been a decrease in pupils with ALN becoming EHE.
- The EHE Policy has been reviewed and an action plan implemented with progress overseen by the Inclusion Core Group. There is good monitoring and pre-emptive processes now in place.

1.3 Wellbeing and Attitudes to Learning: Areas requiring improvement:

- To improve primary school attendance in BG from 94.3% to equate at least to the all-Wales mean of 94.5%. Primary school attendance has declined between 2016/17 and 2018/19 from 94.5% to 94.2%. However, at the end of 2017/18 there were a greater proportion of schools placed in Q1 and Q2. This places BG 3rd in the family of LAs. All Wales mean for Primary attendance stands at 94.6% in 18/19 (LA rank available in March 2020) BG Primary attendance is therefore 0.4pp below the all-Wales means.
- To reduce primary unauthorised absence in BG from 1.4% to that of the all-Wales means which is 1.3%. Primary: unauthorised absence at the end of 2018/19 remained the same as in 2017/18 at 1.4% but still placed BG primary schools 2nd in its family of LAs and in line with the Welsh mean (1.4%).
- To work to reduce persistent absenteeism in the primary sector to well below that of the all-Wales means i.e. Wales= 1.7%, BG=1.6%: Primary: persistent absenteeism in the primary sector has remained at 1.6% since 2015/16. (18/19 data is released in March). The all-Wales means stands at 1.7% BG remains 0.1% below this and ranks joint 1st in our family of LAs and joint 2nd in SEWC.

1.3 Wellbeing and Attitudes to Learning:

Areas requiring improvement:

- To improve secondary school attendance from 92.9% to 93.8% (all-Wales means): Secondary attendance, declined from 93.7% (16/17) to 92.9% (18/19). Based on the trend data over the 3-year period Blaenau Gwent is placed joint 3rd in our family of local authorities and 5th across the SEWC region. All-Wales means for secondary attendance is 93.8% which places BG 0.9pp lower than the all-Wales figures.
- To reduce persistent absenteeism in the secondary sector in BG from 4.1% to below that of the all-Wales means (also currently 4.1%). Persistent absenteeism in the secondary sector has increased from 3.4% to 4.1% since 2015/16, (18/19 data is released in March), which place places BG 1st in our family of local authorities and 2nd across the SEWC region. Despite the slight increase in persistent absenteeism, it is in line with the Welsh average of 4.1%.
- To reduce unauthorised absence in the secondary sector in BG from 2.2% to below that of the all-Wales means (1.6%) Unauthorised absence has increased from 1.5% (16/17) to 2.2% (18/19) and BG remains above national averages (1.7%)

1.3 Wellbeing and Attitudes to Learning:

Areas requiring improvement:

- Exclusions need to reduce: The Inclusion team are working to support the two identified schools in this regard. At the last point that comparative Council data was available (17/18), Blaenau Gwent was 13/22 for rates of 5-day exclusions or less, 4/5 in our family of LAs and 2/5 in South East Wales Consortia (SEWC). For rate of 6 days or more we were joint 6/22, 2/5 in our family of LAs and 2/5 in SEWC. Foundation Phase (FP)/KS2 data shows an increase in incidents of exclusion as well as a commensurate increase in the number of days lost.
- EHE: In 2019 the rate of EHE in BG is 8.5 pupils per 1000 compared to 6.4 per 1000 in 2018. Wales' average is 6.5 per 1000. Wales saw an increase of 0.8pp while the increase in BG was 2/1pp. BG has the 7th highest EHE per 1000 CYP
- 31% of EHE are from Year 11 this compares with 17.6% nationally. A spike has been observed in the numbers of year 11 becoming EHE. Anxiety and bullying remain the key reported factors that led to parents opting to EHE.
- EHE figures for BG schools are too high. Work to support schools and parents/carers in this important area will continue.



2.1 Support for school improvement: Areas where good progress has been made

- Good knowledge of schools and good partnership and close working between the EAS and Directorate/Council services
- Much improved school inspection and significant improvement in school categorisation profile (no primary school in follow-up)
- Good outcomes / progress for identified vulnerable groups in recent years.
- Swift action taken by Council to implement powers to improve schools.
- The process for the appointment of LA Governors is now well established and there is evidence of improved governance in a majority of schools.

2.1 Support for school improvement: Areas requiring improvement:

- To continue intensive work to improve pupil outcomes and progress both ALC and BFS in line with plans
- To continue to work with the EAS and schools to improve outcomes and progress for all pupils, particularly in the secondary sector, for eFSM and vulnerable groups and in the Early Years
- To continue to support schools to improve the effectiveness and impact of their grant planning, particularly PDG
- To work with the EAS, the Directorate Inclusion Services and schools to improve the quality and effectiveness of provision for ALN
- To devise specific school based support to bring about an acceleration in early language acquisition and general skill development in the early years and through to the end of the Foundation Phase the first instance.
- To work with the EAS and schools to increase the number / proportions of learners who achieve higher-level outcomes and progress at each key stage, particularly during the early years and in k
- To work with the EAS and schools to improve attendance, reduce exclusions and EHE

2.2. Support for Vulnerable Learners: areas where progress has been made

- Good progress has been made through the comprehensive ALN Provision Improvement Plan
- The River Centre is now open, ASD provision is in place
- The ALN Service has undergone a review and is being reconfigured to meet the diversity of present need
- Resource Base provision has improved
- Excellent practice has been secured in Pen Y Cwm Special School
- Estyn judgements in school inspections for care support and guidance remain good or better
- Practice to identify pupil progress using matched data (also for specific pupils groups) is now in its second year and is helping to identify where further improvement in provision is needed, for example, in KS3 in particular and in identified schools, in the progress rates between KS 3 and KS 4 in English and Maths, and to secure improved progress for all vulnerable groups, including eFSM and particularly during and between KS3 and KS 4



2.2. Support for Vulnerable Learners: areas where further improvement is required:

- The quality and effectiveness of support to increase attainment of very young pupils in the early years and at the end of the Foundation Phase (particularly eFSM but not solely) needs to improve so that progress rates going forward for these learners is accelerated significantly.
- The quality and effectiveness of support provided for all vulnerable learners, including eFSM needs to improve so that attainment and progress increases significantly both during KS 3 and between Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.
- The quality of provision and effectiveness of leadership and management of inclusion, in these Key Stages, need to improve, particularly in identified schools and settings and for the specific groups in this report and as set out in their relative FADE. To continue to progress the partnership approach with the EAS to bring about this improvement.

Support for Vulnerable Learners: where further improvement is required

Exclusions: to continue with important work underway to reduce exclusions.

To work with Secondary HTs to establish the Revolving Door approach for pupils in the River Centre and mainstream secondary schools

To support the newly reconfigured ALN Service operating out of Pen Y Cwm Special School.


Work with colleagues in the wider Inclusion team and regionally to continue to provide support and challenge for schools in line with the **ALNET Act**.

ALN in EY: Panel arrangements are effective in providing support for EY pupils with ALN. However, developing ALN capacity-building in EY is in the early stages of development and needs to be accelerated

EP Service: to secure an improved and blended working approach with Children's Services to explore how the EPS can work more effectively within Early Years settings


EHE practice for those on the cusp of EHE needs to be more targeted for identified year groups and in identified schools. The Action Plan needs to be fully implemented.

To continue to work closely with the EAS and schools to support schools in improving analysis of pupils with SEN who perform below expected levels to ensure that all pupils show good progress in line with their ability from their individual baselines particularly for **those pupils in KS 3 at SA level**.



2.3 Support for other services: areas where progress has been made

- There has been strong progress through 21st Century Band A and welcomed approval for Band B
- The Youth Service provides good outcomes, reach, support and progress for CYP.
- Strong progress has been made to reduce surplus places and forecast pupil places and manage facilities.
- The Council has good arrangements in place to support the coordination of early years, childcare and play to ensure sufficiency.




2.3 Support for other services: areas where further improvement is required

- To continue to improve cross Directorate working between Youth Services, Education Transformation, Inclusion and School Improvement
- Ensure the Youth Service continues to contribute to the broader Inclusion and Wellbeing agendas, through wider Inclusion meetings and regular meeting with Senior Inclusion leaders.
- To undertake a review of the management of home to school and college transport is managed, and how the Environment and Communities Directorate and Education Directorates develop procedures that are able to more effectively address current gaps that have been identified in reviewing the policy.
- To conduct a review of Online Admissions to further improve parental engagement.

3.1 Quality and effectiveness of leaders and managers: Areas where good progress has been made

- The improving School Categorisation and School Inspection Profile and good progress through the 21st Century schools programme over the last 3 years, demonstrates the increased effectiveness of leaders and managers in Local Government Education Services in Blaenau Gwent.
- The Council considers all evidence and implements its full use of statutory powers where applicable.
- The impact of good, effective leadership is demonstrated through programme completion for example, the opening of 6 Bells, The River Centre, good progress through the 21st Century Schools Band A programme and approval of Band B programme for 2019 to 2024.
- Regional leadership across the SEWC area and nationally is being exercised well by senior officers.




3.1 Quality and effectiveness of leaders and managers: areas where further improvement is required

- To continue to develop the collective understanding and impact of work required regarding The School Standards and Organisation Act, particularly for Schools Causing Concern.
- To continue to develop officer expertise through the Professional Learning Offer.
- To further develop member led self-evaluation activity across key service areas located within Local Government Education Services, for example via the Scrutiny Sub-group looking at Wellbeing in Schools.

3.2 Self-evaluation and improvement planning: Areas where good progress has been made

- The Self-evaluation Policy and practice is now well developed and established part of routine work in the Directorate.
- The FADE approach to writing evaluations is embedded into routine practice. Processes are totally aligned with Corporate policy. The Education Directorate is confident in its SE processes and their ability to sustain continual improvement.
- The Council is swift in its action and use of full statutory powers where applicable, to secure the improvement required.
- Partnership working between the Council and the EAS is strong and is subject to significant joint working and quality assurance.



Self-evaluation and improvement planning: Areas where good progress has been made

- Impact evaluations reveal that the EAS and direct work of Challenge Advisers is having a positive impact on outcomes, provision and the quality of leadership.
- The School Categorisation and School Inspection Profile has improved significantly over the last 3 years effectively evidencing the effectiveness of self-evaluation processes.

3.2 Self-evaluation and improvement planning: Areas where further improvement is required

- To develop the collective understanding of accountabilities as set out in the School Standards and Organisation Act – particularly those regarding schools causing concern
- To continue to engage members in meaningful self – evaluation activity, for example the Scrutiny Sub Group looking at School Wellbeing.
- To continue to ensure that Business Plans bring about the improvement required.
- To continue to engage with a wider stakeholder group when undertaking evaluations, particularly Headteachers.
- To build in a greater range of qualitative evidence into the self-evaluation process


3.3 Professional learning: Areas where progress has been made

- Senior Officers now hold Chair positions across a number of SEWC and all Wales groups; this supports their ongoing professional development.
- 121 coaching sessions are embedded as routine practice. PDR underpinned by an effective 360 process is an embedded process (and available). This also includes contributions from Headteachers for senior Officer's PDR i.e. the Corporate Director for Education and Head of Service for Transformation
- New Headteacher and aspiring deputy induction learning offer is in place and led by an experienced Headteacher
- Staff Wellbeing Survey evidenced very good outcomes




3.3 Professional learning: Areas where further improvement is required

- ▶ To engage in more formal evaluations of the impact and effectiveness of CPD for Directorate officers.
- ▶ To continue to develop ways in which officers can continue to engage in professional development activity via their regional and national roles.



3.4 Safeguarding arrangements: Areas where progress has been made

- The Matrix approach to capturing information is helpful and supports the ongoing improvement in practice in this area.
- The close working arrangements between Education and Social Services departments have developed well, further supporting a coherence of approach regarding safeguarding in schools and settings
- Recent work to respond to community safety issues, counter potential terrorism and extremist behaviours has progressed well, for example, the Safer School Partnership, the Respect and Resilience Action Plan.



Safeguarding arrangements: Areas where progress has been made

- The Operation Encompass work has progressed very well and supports schools in this regard.
- Quality assurance processes to test the robustness of safeguarding processes have been implemented and inform ongoing work in this area.
- The new Council Policy requiring all school Governors to be DBS cleared is being implemented.
- The 2019 Safeguarding Policy has been reviewed and is being implemented

3.4 Safeguarding Arrangements: Areas where further improvement is required

- Continue to develop policy and practice that is responsive to emerging school concerns in line with the Vision for education of school led improvement in a contextual safeguarding approach.
- Full implementation of VAWDA SV (Group 1) training needs to be achieved at school level, as well as the implementation of Group 2 training across all LGES settings
- The 360-degree safe Cymru Policy needs to be agreed by the Executive and implemented in all schools. (by end of summer term 2020)



3.4 Safeguarding Arrangements: Areas where further improvement is required

- Digitalisation of the safeguarding matrix to be developed and streamlined to enable greater readability.
- Provide greater flexibility in the training offer to increase the uptake of safeguarding training by school governors



3.5 Use of resources: Areas where progress has been made

- Protection of ISB 1% uplift FY 2019/20 and all WG grant (2020/21) will be pass ported to schools for 2020/21 (equating to a 5% uplift)
- SMR 2 and SMR 2+ now complete with Service Manager for Inclusion and Strategic Education Improvement Manager now in place.
- EAS provides good value for money
- Schools have worked strategically with the Directorate to establish a PRC budget for staff terminations.
- All schools have signed up to the 3 year SLA arrangement with the Council.
- 21st Century Band A nearing successful completion Band B approved.

3.5 Use of resources: areas requiring improvement

- Schools' deficit balances in the secondary sector have increased and need to be kept under close review going forward; timely support to be provided by the LA. Review of funding formula to be completed prior to start of FY 2020/21
- Additional Welsh Medium provision needs to be developed and the WESP progressed accordingly.
- Cost pressures for transport, OOC placements and AWPU exist and work needs to continue to reduce them
- The ALN Service operating out of Pen Y Cwm Special school needs to deliver high impact and high quality support to schools.
- Bridging the Gap work programme needs to continue so that potential for a more blended service delivery is fully explored fully and opportunities maximised where possible.