

Committee: **Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **26th February 2020**

Report Subject: **School Categorisation**

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)
	04.02.2020	14.02.20			26.02.2020	11.03.20		

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To inform Scrutiny Members of the Blaenau Gwent school categorisation profile for 2020.

2 Scope and Background

- 2.1 The report covers the categorisation of all schools in Blaenau Gwent County Borough.

2.2 National School Categorisation

The Minister for Education and Skills announced the introduction of the National School Categorisation System in September 2014. The system, which covers both primary schools and secondary schools, has evolved over subsequent years.

From 2017-2018, Welsh Government removed the data-driven judgement that placed schools into a standards group as part of Step 1. Discussion around the school's self-evaluation and school development planning has become the central feature of the model. The school's data remains as a starting point for discussions within the school and with the Challenge Adviser about their capacity to improve in relation to leadership, teaching and learning.

3. Options for Recommendation

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

Option 1

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.

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 Statutory Responsibility

4.1.1 The national approach to school categorisation seeks to ensure that our learning organisations are appropriately supported and clearly aligned to the aims and objectives set out below:

4.1.2 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 building to help learners achieve great outcomes
- To continue to support our school leaders to help our pupils achieve their ambitions.”

4.1.3 Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan

The statutory framework is clearly aligned to the objectives in the Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan which aims for everyone to have the best start in life.

Through this plan it seeks to ensure that the education provision is appropriate and able to meet the needs of children and young people so that their progress 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 There are no direct financial implications for this report. However, the Council allocates approximately £42 million to schools via the Individual Schools Budget (ISB) to provide high quality education and to improve pupil outcomes.

5.1.2 Blaenau Gwent continues to make a financial contribution to the regional EAS arrangements of approximately £300,000 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.

5.2 **Risk including Mitigating Actions**

Risk is associated with underperformance and ineffective processes to improve performance 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.

5.3 **Legal**

As part of the agreed National Model for Regional Working, Welsh Government, local government, regional consortia and the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) have worked together to ensure a national and consistent approach to the categorisation of schools.

5.4 **Human Resources**

None for this report.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

6.1.1 **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, the chart below shows that 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.

Primary School

		Numbers of Schools				Percentage of Schools			
		Red	Amber	Yellow	Green	Red	Amber	Yellow	Green
Step 3	17-18	0	2	11	6	0%	11%	58%	32%
	18-19	0	2	8	9	0%	11%	42%	47%
	19-20	0	2	8	9	0%	11%	42%	47%
		D	C	B	A	D	C	B	A
Step 2	17-18	0	1	12	6	0%	5%	63%	32%
	18-19	0	0	10	9	0%	0%	53%	47%
	19-20	0	2	8	9	0%	11%	42%	47%

6.1.2 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 drafting the report 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.

The chart below shows that during the past three years, the proportion of schools in the green category has remained stable at Step 2 and Step 3.

Secondary Schools (excluding special schools)

		Numbers of Schools				Percentage of Schools			
		Red	Amber	Yellow	Green	Red	Amber	Yellow	Green
Step 3	17-18	1	0	0	1	50%	0%	0%	50%
	18-19	1	0	0	1	50%	0%	0%	50%
	19-20	1	0	0	1	50%	0%	0%	50%
		D	C	B	A	D	C	B	A
Step 2	17-18	1	1	0	1	33%	33%	0%	33%
	18-19	0	1	0	1	0%	50%	0%	50%
	19-20	1	0	0	1	50%	0%	0%	50%

6.1.3 All Through School

This year the data for all through schools has been extracted whereas previously it was included within the primary or secondary data. However, within this data set the categorisation of Special schools (Penycwm – Green and The River Centre – Yellow) is not included. However, for holistic purposes if it were to be included, the profile for the current year would demonstrate that many of the all through settings (75%) are categorised as either green or yellow for Step 2 and 3.

		Numbers of Schools				Percentage of Schools			
		Red	Amber	Yellow	Green	Red	Amber	Yellow	Green
Step 3	19-20	1	0	2	1	25%	0%	50%	25%
		D	C	B	A	D	C	B	A
Step 2	19-20	1	0	2	1	25%	0%	50%	25%

However, when the special schools are removed from analysis, the chart below shows that during the past three years, the proportion of schools in the yellow category has remained stable at Step 2 whilst at Step 3 improvements have been seen during the three year period.

6.1.4 All Through Schools (excluding Special schools)

		Numbers of Schools				Percentage of Schools			
		Red	Amber	Yellow	Green	Red	Amber	Yellow	Green
Step 3	17-18	1	1	0	0	50%	50%	0%	0%
	18-19	1	0	1	0	50%	0%	50%	0%
	19-20	1	0	1	0	50%	0%	50%	0%
		D	C	B	A	D	C	B	A
Step 2	17-18	1	0	1	0	50%	0%	50%	0%
	18-19	1	0	1	0	50%	0%	50%	0%
	19-20	1	0	1	0	50%	0%	50%	0%

At the time of drafting the report the regional comparative information for all school settings is not available.

6.1.5 Combined Categorisation

Overall, the 2019 /20 data confirms that over the last 3 years schools have continued to improve their categorisation profile. However, regional comparisons at this time are not available.

In summary:-

- Many schools (82%) are now categorised as either green or yellow
- Very few (7%) (only two primary schools categorised as amber, with,
- A few 11% (only two schools categorised as red (one all through and one secondary school)). Importantly, these two schools continue to receive bespoke, timely support to enable them to improve.

This represents a significant improvement in the improvement journey when compared to the profile in 2014 when only two schools were green.

Appendix 1 2019 /20 categorisation data.

All Schools (including, Special and PRU)

		Numbers of Schools				Percentage of Schools			
		Red	Amber	Yellow	Green	Red	Amber	Yellow	Green
Step 3	17-18	3	5	11	8	11%	19%	41%	30%
	18-19	3	2	11	11	11%	7%	41%	41%
	19-20	3	2	11	11	11%	7%	41%	41%
		D	C	B	A	D	C	B	A
Step 2	17-18	3	1	15	8	11%	4%	56%	30%
	18-19	2	1	13	11	7%	4%	48%	41%
	19-20	3	2	11	11	11%	7%	41%	41%

NB The separate phases of primary and secondary are recorded separately in the above table

This data set further evidences the practical implementation of the vision with schools implementing a partnership, school-led, self –improving school to school, system approach to secure excellent achievement and wellbeing.

Consequently, schools and clusters continue to build their capacity to self-improve and are becoming more resilient. With our partners we will continue to provide tailored support for all schools and settings and work to support agreed identified areas for improvement and enable the sharing of best practice within across the region and nationally across Wales.

6.2 *Expected outcome for the public*

Monitoring and understanding a school's improvement journey is an important mechanism for ensuring that parents, residents and members of the Education Scrutiny Committee are sufficiently informed to enable them to hold the authority to account effectively for the quality of education provision.

6.3 *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.

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

The SEWC regional framework for school categorisation linked with support for schools causing concern seeks to ensure that schools deliver high quality provision and standards in the long term with the aim that Estyn reflects this in their inspection reporting.

Coupled with this the Council's agreed Vision for Education of a school led self-improving system identifies that schools need to continue to develop greater resilience to change, financial challenges and changes in leadership so that progression and continuity in learning and hence outcomes for children and young people are not unduly compromised by these challenges.

6.5 *Preventative focus*

A key element of the Council's work is to monitor settings and ensure appropriate support to secure continuing high standards. Estyn Inspection reports reflect the extent to which settings and Local Authorities has been effective in achieving this.

6.6 *Collaboration / partnership working*

Educational improvement in Blaenau Gwent is delivered on a regional basis through the South East Wales Consortium in collaboration with Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen Councils.

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

Ensuring that schools deliver high quality education provision to secure high pupil outcomes relates directly to the first of the Council's three high level outcomes within the Corporate Plan that children's and young people's learning and achievement levels are maximised, and to the first of the Council's improvement objectives which is to ensure that Education Standards are raised particularly at Key Stage 4.

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

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

Not required for this report.

7 **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 This report provides information about Welsh Government National categorisation, undertaken by regional consortia. Whilst there are both appeals processes for schools, regional and national moderation, these have now concluded and categorisations published.

7.2 Scrutiny members receive an annual report on school categorisation. As such, the monitoring and understanding of a school's improvement journey is an important mechanism for ensuring that members of the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee are sufficiently informed to enable them to hold the Authority to account effectively for the quality of education provision and the effectiveness of its commissioned school improvement service.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

Appendix 1 – School Categorisation