

Committee: **Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **15<sup>th</sup> December 2020**

Report Subject: **Management of Pupil Places and the School Estate 2019/2020**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr. Joanne Collins, Executive Member Education**

Report Submitted by: **Education Transformation Manager – Claire Gardner**

Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
26.11.20	26.11.20	27.11.20			15.12.20	13.01.21		

**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 and the school estate, throughout the 2019/2020 academic session. The report serves to provide a detailed overview of both the processes and outcomes associated with pupil place and facilities management.

**2. Scope and Background**

- 2.1 Councils have a duty to manage, monitor, review and plan pupil places on an annual basis, in line with the following Welsh Government Guidance and Legislation.
- 2.2 Capacity calculations were determined for each of the schools in November 2019, which informed the final admission numbers published within the Blaenau Gwent School Admissions Policy 2021/2022.
- 2.3 The Education Transformation team review pupil projections including surplus and sufficiency issues throughout the school estate twice per/annum. Projections are undertaken for primary schools for a 5-year period and a 7-year period for secondary schools.
- 2.4 Pupil projection accuracy remains consistently high with 99% of secondary and 97% of primary projections in January 2020, confirmed to be accurate in September 2020.
- 2.5 Surplus places within the primary sector has increased to 13% in January 2020, when compared to 11% in Jan 2019, however, we remain within our target, which is 15%. The increase is attributable to more pupils leaving primary school (Year 6) at the end of the 2018/19 academic year than pupils starting primary school (R) in 2019/20. This is consistent with pupil progressions expected in line with Aneurin Bevan University Health Board live birth data.
- 2.6 There was however, an increase in year 6 transition to secondary, which has resulted in a decrease in surplus places across the secondary sector with the % going from 19% in Jan 2019 to 16% in Jan 2020 (i.e. more pupils started in Year 7 than pupils leaving in Year 11). The table/graph in

**Appendix 1**, demonstrates a positive position throughout the school estate, which for secondary is the lowest it has been throughout the last 9 years, and primary still within target. It is important to maintain a level of surplus to accommodate potential growth and reconfiguration of the learning environment in line with strategic and education developments such as the new curriculum.

- 2.7 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 12%, by the 2023/24 academic year – with the overall combined projected status falling from 14% in Jan 2020 to 10% in 2024.
- 2.8 The School Organisation Policy (2017) sets a target of reducing surplus places to 15% across the County Borough; by the primary sector is projected to remain under 15% over the next 5 years and the secondary sector is set to reduce to under 15% over the 5 years. For 2019/20 the Education Transformation team targeted the following schools whereby the percentage was 15% or over, in line with the delivery of surplus place reduction action plans during the 2018/19 academic session:
- Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg – Admission number reduced from 258 to 241 resulting in the surplus % reducing from 17% in 18/19 to 13% in 19/20.
  - Ebbw Fawr Learning Community Primary Phase – school capacity reduced from 360 to 324 for 2019/20, however, this did not improve the surplus place %, which is presently at 25%, as pupil numbers have fallen due to the decrease in live births within the school's catchment area. The decrease was as follows from 81 births in 2014/15 to 59 births 2016/17, which would equate to a loss of 22 pupils, affecting the number and size of the classes within the school.
- 2.9 The Education Transformation team's strategy for the 2020/21 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 2020/21 and 2023:
- Coed y Garn Primary School reduced admission number from 246, (which equates to 21% surplus places) to 210 (7% surplus places)
  - Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg reduced from 241 (13% surplus places) to 215 (-3% insufficient places)
  - Ebbw Fawr Primary Campus reduced from 324 (25% surplus places) to 284 (12% surplus places)
- 2.10 Live birth rates have fluctuated over the last ten years, with a downward trend noted between 2012 and 2019 (Please refer to **Appendix 2** for more information). 2017/2018 academic session was the start of an upward trend, with Births increasing from 688 in 2016/17, to 714 in 2017/18, rising further to 730 in 2018/19. However, 2019/20 data demonstrates a decrease to 689. Migration into Blaenau Gwent between September 2019 and August 2020 increases with approximately 200 pupils – approx. 150 of which were

primary pupils and approx.50 secondary pupils, moving into Blaenau Gwent between September 2019 and August 2020.

2.11 There are a relatively small number of schools which are projected to have sufficiency issues between 2021 and 2025 as follows:

- Glyncoed Primary School
- Coed y Garn Primary School
- Abertillery Learning Community Secondary Campus

2.12 All of which can and will be addressed via the annual capacity assessment.

2.13 **All Wales Position**

The latest dataset available is the January 2018/19 surplus place overview for Wales (please refer to **Appendix 3** for more information). Blaenau Gwent's position was as follows:

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

2.14 The Council are presently awaiting the Family of Local Authority and All Wales comparative data sets for the 2019/20 academic sessions, which are scheduled for release in early 2021

2.15 **Management of the School Estate Maintenance, Repair and Planned Works**

The Division of Responsibilities Guidance and associated procedure (Please refer to **Appendix 4**), were successfully implemented during the 2019/20 academic sessions. 465 TE100's were received between September 2019 and August 2020, 100% of which were acknowledged and received a response within 48 hours of receipt. 311 (67%) have been reported as being completed to date

2.16 All unresolved works are programmed for delivery and will be resolved by the end of the spring-term 2021. Delays in resolving this issues are attributable to the following:

- School closures and contractor availability throughout the emergency response period.
- Access to school buildings in line with the schools individual COVID Secure Risk Assessments.
- Programming and time constraints due to the size/scale of works and in order to minimise the potential for disruption.
- Budgetary constraints faced by schools.
- Securing contractors to undertake the required work.
- The capacity of Technical Services to assess the extent of repair/ maintenance work and associated costs during the emergency response.

2.17 Each school has a facilities review action plan in place, which is monitored on a monthly basis.

2.18 **Health and Safety and Fire Risk Assessment**

In line with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and in the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005; the Council has a duty to monitor compliance and manage health and safety and fire risk assessment related matters in school's/ education buildings.

2.19 The data below details Health & Safety and Fire Risk Assessment developments and actions undertaken throughout the 2019/20 academic session the following inspections were carried out:

- 3 Health & Safety Inspections were carried out during the Autumn Term, 29 actions were identified,13 (45%) of which have now yet been completed
- 5 Health & Safety Inspections were carried out during the Spring Term, 44 actions were identified,22 (50%) of which have not yet been completed
- 6 Fire Risk Assessment Inspections were carried out during the Autumn Term, 117 actions were identified,59 (50%) of which have now yet been completed
- 4 Fire Risk Assessment Inspections were carried out during the Spring Term, 54 actions were identified,34 (67%) of which have not yet been completed

2.20 Those outstanding actions from the 2019/20 academic session are being prioritised and programmed for resolution by the end of the summer-term 2021. All schools have been supported throughout the pandemic with reopening/operational plans, risk assessment development and review, and urgent/priority facilities works aligned to health and safety.

2.21 **Condition and Suitability**

The 2019/20 position for school building condition and suitability continues to improve, in line with:

- The TE100 process
- Health and Safety and FRA action monitoring and implementation
- Planned Works and Structural Maintenance Programmes
- The Minor Works Programme
- 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme Delivery (along with wider education projects i.e. the ICT Infrastructure and Connectivity Project)

2.22 Condition and suitability assessment criteria range from A (good) - D (bad). Blaenau Gwent has only 1 school categorised as 'D' for condition. **Appendix 5** highlights the latest position in respect of the Blaenau Gwent school estate. The condition and suitability programme for the 2019/20 academic session, was planned for implementation from January 2020; however, this was not able to be taken forward due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and has been reprogrammed for completion by the end of the Spring-term 2021. There is only one school building categorised as a 'D'

(Glyncoed Primary School) within the school estate, which is being address and replaced with a new building under Band B of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme.

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

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

**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 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 a statutory duty and responsibilities in line with the planning of school places and the management school Estate in line with:

- Welsh Government's Measuring the Capacity of Schools in Wales Guidance (2011)
- Welsh Government School Admission and Admission Appeals Code's (2013)
- Welsh Government School Organisation Code (2013)
- The School Standards and Framework Act 1998
- The Local Authority Financial Scheme Regulations 1998
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

The planning of school places and management of the school estate seeks to respond to the Council's wellbeing goals for all learners.

### 5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 **Impact on Budget** - Welsh Government have indicated that there will be a further Schools Capital Maintenance Grant allocated to Local Authorities in 2020/21 financial year. The Council received a Welsh Government Schools Capital Maintenance Grant of £825,673 for the 2019/20 financial year, which alongside the minor works budget, will result in a capital investment of approximately £902,000 into the school estate, once all programmed works have been completed. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, £55,255 was secured via the Welsh Government Hardship Fund, to address required facilities adaptations and works to facilitate the repurposing and reopening of schools. Minor, structural and planned works are reviewed and programmed each academic session for the preceding year.

5.2 **Risk** - The Council have 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 legal implications associated with this report.

## 6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data** - Surplus places are set to decrease further to within and below target over the next 5 years (Please refer to **Appendix 6** for pupil projection data as at January 2019).

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. The management of the school estate seeks to secure improved condition and suitability of education facilities in line with the creation and management of sustainable education system in Blaenau Gwent

6.3 **Involvement** -Stakeholders and end user needs and engagement are of paramount importance to the planning of school places and management of the school estate.

6.4 **Thinking for the Long-term** - The planning of pupil places and management of the school estate takes account of short, medium and long-term planning arrangements informing:

- Minor works and maintenance priorities
- 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools and School Organisation Priorities
- Capacity plans in line with school admissions.

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 i.e. Education, headteachers, Health and Safety, Social Services, Community Services, Planning and Building Control, Environmental Health, Highways and Development etc.
- 6.7 The pupil place and school estate management process seeks to secure appropriate levels of provision, whilst monitoring and addressing the condition and suitability of education facilities. Education works closely with partners to ensure compliance with Welsh Government legislation, and that key local, regional, and national policy developments are accounted for, whilst also taking on board learning from the previous academic year.
- 6.9 **Integration** - 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.
- 6.9 **EqIA** - Equality impact assessments are continuously carried out in line with both the management of pupil places and the school estate.
- 6.10 **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 1a and 1b – Surplus Place % and Graph  
Appendix 2 – Live Birth Data and Graph  
Appendix 3 – All Wales Graph  
Appendix 4 – DoR Guidance  
Appendix 5 – Condition and Suitability Assessment  
Appendix 6 – January 2020 Projections