DRAFT AGENDA

ID	2215
Committee	Pwllgor Craffu Addysg a Dysgu
Date	03/11/2020
Attendees	Cynghorwyr Haydn Trollope (Cadeirydd)
	Cynghorwyr Julie Holt (Is-gadeirydd)
	Cynghorwyr Derrick Bevan (Aelod Pwyllgor)
	Cynghorwyr Garth Collier (Aelod Pwyllgor)
	Cynghorwyr Martin Cook (Aelod Pwyllgor)
	Cynghorwyr Malcolm Day (Aelod Pwyllgor)
	Cynghorwyr D. Lyn Elias (Aelod Pwyllgor)
	Cynghorwyr Wayne Hodgins (Aelod Pwyllgor)
	Cynghorwyr Clive Meredith (Aelod Pwyllgor)
	Cynghorwyr John C. Morgan (Aelod Pwyllgor)
	Cynghorydd John P. Morgan (Aelod Pwyllgor)
	Cynghorwyr Lee Parsons (Aelod Pwyllgor)
	Cynghorwyr Bob Summers (Aelod Pwyllgor)
	Cynghorwyr Tommy Smith (Aelod Pwyllgor)
	Cynghorwyr Stephen Thomas (Aelod Pwyllgor)
	Mr. Tim Baxter (Co-Optee)
	Mr. Alun Williams (Co-Optee)
	Lynn Phillips (Swyddog)
	Gavin Metheringham (Swyddog)
	Gemma Wasley (Swyddog)
	Michelle Jones (Swyddog)
	Liz Thomas (Swyddog)
	Gwasanaethau Democrataidd (Notify)
	Leeann Turner (Secretary)
	Pob Cynghorydd (Notify)
	Louise Bishop (Notify)
	Sean Scannell (Notify)
	Anne-Louise Clark (Notify)
	Richard Crook (Notify)
	Rhian Hayden (Notify)
	Damien McCann (Notify)
	Michelle Morris (Notify)
	Steve Berry (Swyddog)
	Andrea Jones (Swyddog)
	Cynghorwyr Joanne Collins (Notify)

Item ID	2769
Item Title	Cyfieithu ar y Pryd
Summary	Mae croeso i chi ddefnyddio'r Gymraeg yn y cyfarfod, mae angen o leiaf 3 diwrnod gwaith o rybudd os dymunwch wneud

	hynny. Darperir gwasanaeth cyfieithu ar y pryd os gwneir cais.

Item ID	2770
Item Title	Ymddiheuriadau
Summary	Derbyn ymddiheuriadau.

Item ID	2771
Item Title	Datganiadau Buddiant a Goddefebau
Summary	Ystyried unrhyw ddatganiadau buddiant a goddefebau a wnaed.

Item ID	2854
Item Title	Pwllgor Craffu Addysg a Dysgu
Summary	Derbyn cofnodion y cyfarfod o'r Pwyllgor Craffu Addysg a Dysgu a gynhaliwyd ar 15 Medi 2020. (Dylid nodi y cyflwynir y Cofnodion er pwyntiau cywirdeb yn unig).

Item ID	2929
Item Title	Dalen Weithredu – 15 Medi 2020
Summary	Derbyn y Ddalen Weithredu.

Item ID	2928
Item Title	Blaenraglen Gwaith – 15 Rhagfyr 2020
Summary	Ystyried yr adroddiad.

Item ID	2930
Item Title	Deilliannau 2019-2020: Cyfnod Sylfaen, Cyfnod Allweddol 2, Cyfnod Allweddol 3, Cyfnod Allweddol 4
Summary	Ystyried adroddiad y Cyfarwyddwr Corfforaethol Interim Addysg a Chyfarwyddwr Cynorthwyol EAS.

Item ID	2931
Item Title	Crynodeb o Ddeilliannau Arolygon Sefydliadau Addysgol – Tymor yr Hydref 2019 a Thymor y Gwanwyn 2020

Summary	Ystyried adroddiad y Cyfarwyddwr Corfforaethol Addysg

Item ID	2932
Item Title	Canlyniad yr Adolygiad Hamdden a Monitro Perfformiad Ymddiriedolaeth Hamdden Aneurin
Summary	Ystyried adroddiad y Cyfarwyddwr Corfforaethol Interim Addysg.

Item ID	2933
Item Title	Cyfarwyddiaeth Addysg – Ymateb i COVID-19
Summary	Ystyried adroddiad y Cyfarwyddwr Corfforaethol Interim Addysg.

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: **THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE EDUCATION & LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

SUBJECT: **EDUCATION & LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 15TH SEPTEMBER, 2020**

REPORT OF: **DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR H. TROLLOPE (CHAIR)

Councillors: J. Holt
D. Bevan
M. Cook
M. Day
L. Elias
W. Hodgins
C. Meredith
J.C. Morgan
J.P. Morgan
T. Smith
B. Summers
S. Thomas

Co-opted Members
T. Baxter

AND: Interim Corporate Director of Education
Strategic Education Improvement Manager
Education Transformation Manager
Service Manager - Inclusion
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer / Advisor

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	**SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION** It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.	

UPDATE - RETURNING TO SCHOOL DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

At the request of the Chair, the Interim Corporate Director Education provided a verbal update on returning to school during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The Interim Director confirmed that a full report would be presented to the next Scrutiny Committee covering the emergency response to date and an update on the reopening of schools.

It was reported that the process to re-open the schools had been a strategic approach with the formation of Executive Planning Groups for both primary and secondary school sectors. There were two planning days and two transitional planning days included into the process with specific targeting of certain year groups. The Education team with corporate support developed guidance to support the reopening of schools and this included health and safety advice and the undertaking of risk assessments.

It was reported that all schools in Blaenau Gwent opened fully on the 7th September. This had been in advance of the Welsh Government requirement of 14th September. In terms of attendance, it was advised that as of week commencing 7th September attendance was at 84% which dropped to 81% by the Friday, the reasons for the reduction in attendance was not yet known.

The Interim Corporate Director Education continued that there have been 4 confirmed Covid-19 cases in schools at present. There was one case in a primary school which had not impacted other pupils and 3 pupils in a secondary school. The guidance was revised to take account of these cases, for example school assemblies would not take place and face masks are encouraged in communal areas. The school based staff attendance is being monitored by OD and so far 20 staff are self-isolating, although it was anticipated that this number could increase.

A Member asked if the officers were confident guidelines were being followed and also asked what support was in place for parents.

The Interim Corporate Director advised that the guidance would be enforced at the next planning meeting on Friday and clear messages have been provided to the schools and parents.

Another Member asked if an infected pupil had a sibling in a different school what would be the advice to parents. The Education Transformation Manager explained the process and it was felt that guidance available for parents needed to be clear. The Officer reiterated that these messages are being provided and would continue to be available to parents.

Further concerns were raised in relation to guidance and it was stated that it was crucial that the appropriate information was available for schools, parents and pupils.

A Member commended school based staff for their dedication in getting the schools back up and running.

In response to a question raised in relation to Welsh Government monies, it was asked if this funding was available to supply pupils with masks. The Interim Corporate Director confirmed that £1.8m had been allocated across Wales and the allocation for Blaenau Gwent had yet to be received to date. However, Corporate Procurement were ready to purchase the masks and visors for staff. The Chair added that visors should also be made available for pupils who cannot wear face coverings.

The Interim Corporate Director Education advised that all these issues would be considered when risk assessments are carried out.

In relation to face masks, the Member noted that Welsh Government had left it to local authorities to make the decision if face coverings should be mandatory in schools and the Member felt that Blaenau Gwent should make it mandatory.

The Member further raised concerns in relation to the protocols in place in notifying schools if a pupil had tested positive.

The Education Transformation Manager advised that a great deal of work had been undertaken with schools during the summer and had alternative control measures in place to ensure the safety of both staff and pupils. The Manager added that making face coverings mandatory would be the last resort. There were variations in other local authorities, however, in Blaenau Gwent it was encouraged to wear a face covering in communal areas and the Education Transformation Manager stated that consideration also needed to be given to guidance in terms of infection control in respect of face coverings.

In response to a positive test result, it was informed that it had only taken 20 minutes to contact Environmental Health who then contacted the headteacher. All parties had been in constant contact over the weekend and a meeting had been arranged for the Monday morning.

Another Member advised that he had been contacted by residents with concerns that pupils using school transport were removing their face coverings and asked if escorts should be in place on all school transport to enforce this rule. The Education Transformation Manager advised that a zero tolerance policy had been agreed in terms of school transport, however, the Authority needed a careful balance to ensure both the safety measures are in place and that children are able to access education. There was also hand sanitizer on all buses which was encouraged to be used.

It was important that the children were adhering to advice and the parents would need to be informed to ensure the zero tolerance policy was reinforced.

Further points were raised in terms of positive cases of pupils who may have come into contact with children outside of their year groups whilst accessing school transport. It was reported that children who use school transport was registered for Test, Trace and Protect purposes. The Education Transformation Manager added that the Authority also took advice from Public Health Wales and if a pupil had been in contact with a positive pupil they would be asked to self-isolate.

	Another Member noted his disappointment that information had been placed on social media which had not been provided to Elected representatives. The Member felt it was important that these messages are being communicated, however there was also a need for Councillors to be informed. The Member advised that he had received numerous calls in relation to a local matter but was unable to comment as he was not aware of the incident and asked that Members be informed of any such cases in their respective Wards. The Interim Corporate Director Education noted the importance of communication and it was key that Elected representatives received regular updates. The Co-opted Member stated that the support from Education and other Departments in the Council had been great. The clear and calm instructions from officers had kept the schools running during this very difficult period. The Co-opted Member sought clarification on the process for an inconclusive test result. The Education Transformation Manager advised that discussions would be undertaken with Environmental Health as to how this would be addressed and then contact would be made with the head teacher. Although the Manager assumed that self-isolation should be continued until a further test was carried out. In response to a question raised in relation to guidance for schools, the Interim Corporate Director Education advised that school guidance documents had been produced and would be regularly updated as new information was received from Welsh Government.	
No. 2	**APOLOGIES** Apologies for absence were received from Councillors L. Parsons, G. Collier and Alun Williams.	
No. 3	**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS** There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.	

No. 4	**EDUCATION & LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**	
	The Minutes of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 26th February, 2020 were submitted.	
	The Committee AGREED that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.	
No. 5	**ACTION SHEET – 26TH FEBRUARY, 2020**	
	The action sheet arising from the meeting of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee held on 26th February, 2020 was submitted.	
	The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the action sheet be noted.	
No. 6	**TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS**	
	The Committee AGREED that future meetings be held at 10.00 a.m.	
No. 7	**PROPOSED SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2020-21**	
	Consideration was given to the report of the Chair of the Education & Learning Scrutiny Committee.	
	A discussion ensued around School Inspection reports and Members noted the importance of the Inspection reports which are statutory items and should be available on the agenda to be scrutinised by Members. The Interim Corporate Director concurred with these comments and the Chair thereupon proposed that School Inspection reports be presented as part of the agenda going forward.	
	The Committee AGREED this course of action.	
	The Committee AGREED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1.	

No. 8	**HOME TO SCHOOL AND POST 16 TRANSPORT POLICY 2021/22: APPROVAL AND PUBLICATION (BY 1ST OCTOBER, 2020)**	
	Consideration was given to the report of the Education Transformation Manager which was presented to seek the views of Scrutiny Members in relation to the review of the Blaenau Gwent Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy for the 2021/22 academic session.	

The Education Transformation Manager advised that the Council had a duty to publish the home to school and post 16 transport policies. The Council's policy must be made available by the 1st October proceeding the academic year to which the policy related. The policy has been reviewed by the Education Transformation, Inclusion and Transport teams, along with Children's Services and the Manager noted that the revised document was attached at Appendix 1 and referred to the minor additions, which had been proposed.

The Education Transformation Manager further referred Members to the budget implications and advised that the Home to School Transport budget was approximately £1.9m, and the Post 16 budget was approximately £133,290 per annum. The Policy was last reviewed in September 2019 and adopted in October 2019. The policy would ensure that there was an appropriate framework to aid delivery and therefore reduce the risk of overspend relating.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1; namely the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee considered the Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy 2021/22 (Appendix 1), and recommended it to Executive Committee for approval.

| No. 9 | **BLAENAU GWENT –**
POST 16 PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

Consideration was given to the report of the Youth Services Manager which was presented to provide Members of the Scrutiny Committee with an opportunity to scrutinise a proposal to establish a Blaenau Gwent Post 16 Partnership Board to oversee the strategic development of academic and vocational provision for learners across the County Borough.

The Interim Corporate Director Education advised that there was a strong partnership arrangement between the Council and Coleg Gwent. The Learning Zone delivered an annual performance report to the Council which featured as a key component of the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee's Forward Work Programme. In addition to the Learning Zone, a number of post 16 Work Based Learning organisations provide alternative training opportunities across Blaenau Gwent and the Aspire Apprenticeship programme was delivered by the Authority.

The Interim Corporate Director added that Blaenau Gwent Learning Zone's performance continued to improve and the transformation of post 16 provision across the County Borough had delivered more post 16 learners, a wider range of courses, particularly for vocational provision and improved attainment levels. The strong partnership continued to progress and a systematic approach was in place to share data at both a strategic and operational level. The partnership would be developed further through the establishment of a Post 16 Partnership Board with representation from the Education Directorate, Coleg Gwent, work based learning providers and Blaenau Gwent secondary school settings. There would also be representation from colleagues in Regeneration to encompass the broader skills and economic development agenda, contributing towards the Blaenau Gwent Employment and Skills Plan. The Interim Corporate Director Education added that it was hoped that the Partnership Board would be in place by the autumn term and welcomed comments on the draft Terms of Reference for the Blaenau Gwent Post 16 Partnership Board. | |

The Scrutiny Committee would monitor progress going forward as reports would form part of the Forward Work Programme.

A Member raised concerns in the relation to the number of post 16 training being undertaken out of the County. The Member felt that a high number of pupils was going to neighbouring Boroughs as the courses was not available in Ebbw Vale. It was important that Blaenau Gwent offered a wide range of options to give these young people aspirations.

The Interim Corporate Director Education advised that some young people have always chosen to go to other campuses, e.g. to undertake Horticultural Studies at the Usk Campus. There was a reduction in pupils attending a neighbouring 6th form, however this year the amount of A Levels awarded had actually increased and this was against the national trend increasing the previous year figures. The Interim Corporate Director added that a number of learners were now increasingly opting to study vocational courses.

Concerns were raised around the grant funded Aspire programme and it was felt that without guaranteed grants to maintain Aspire apprenticeships these opportunities could be lost to young people.

The Interim Corporate Director Education advised that both Inspire managed by the Youth Service and Aspire operated by the Regeneration team were funded with the assistance of European Social Funding. Both these programmes are being monitored via the risk management process.

Councillor M. Cook left the meeting at this juncture.

The Chair asked who would be attending the Partnership Board on behalf of Blaenau Gwent. It was confirmed that the Interim Corporate Director Education and Youth Service Manager would be in attendance. An invitation would also be extended to the Executive Member for Education to oversee the work of the group.

	The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; Members scrutinised the information detailed within the report and made the appropriate recommendations to the Executive Committee for final approval.	
No. 10	**BLAENAU GWENT EDUCATION SERVICES** **DRAFT SELF – EVALUATION FINDINGS** Consideration was given to the report of the Interim Corporate Director of Education. The Interim Corporate Director advised the report provided Members of the Scrutiny Committee with an opportunity to scrutinise the findings of ongoing self-evaluation processes undertaken within the Education Directorate, across the Council and with key partners. The Interim Corporate Director further spoke to the report and highlighted the key points as outlined in the report. Councillor B. Summers left the meeting at this juncture. A Member asked what financial implications had Covid-19 had on schools in terms of teachers self-isolating, the need for replacements to be sought and would this be covered by the monies to be received from Welsh Government. The Interim Corporate Director Education advised that during the closure of schools some revenue savings had been made, therefore some school balances had improved, however budgets were being monitored closely. In terms of Welsh Government funding, the monies received had assisted with for example enhanced cleaning in response to Covid-19. Further discussions ensued in relation to KS4 and A Level results as well as how the Directorate had performed. It was also felt that the impact Covid-19 had on schools needed to be taken into consideration as well as the need for blended learning going forward. It was anticipated that schools would need to provide this blended form of learning going forward therefore it needed to be effective. These issues would be important during the next 12 months.	

	The Interim Corporate Director Education responded that if any schools were causing concerns these would be flagged up via the appropriate process and brought to Members via the Improving Schools report.
	The Interim Corporate Director Education noted the points raised and advised that the advert for the post of Corporate Director was currently live and it was anticipated that an appointment would be made in October. He advised that the Directorate was also recruiting a School Improvement Leader and this advert was also live.
	In response to a question raised in relation to new elective home learners, it was advised that a small number of parents had requested to home school their children. The Inclusion Manager added that the Directorate had been proactive in addressing parents' anxieties when an enquiry had been made and it was hoped that following these discussions their concerns had been addressed.
	The Committee AGREED to recommend that the report be accepted and endorse Option 2; namely Members scrutinised the information detailed within the report and contributed to the continuous assessment of effectiveness by making appropriate recommendations to the Executive Committee.
No. 11	**REVISED LA GOVERNOR POLICY** Consideration was given to the report of the Strategic Education Improvement Manager which was presented to consult Members of the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee on the revised Local Authority Governor Policy prior to consideration by the Executive Committee. The Chair referred to the recent LEA Governor Panel and noted his request for the meeting to be clerked. He felt that it was important that the decisions made at the panel were recorded formally as applicants are permitted to request a Freedom of Information request to have sight of discussions. The Officer confirmed that this had now been agreed with Business Support and agreed to include this arrangement in the report to be presented to the Executive Committee.

	The Committee AGREED this course of Action. The Committee AGREED to recommend, subject to the foregoing that the report be accepted and endorse Option 1	

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Action Sheet

Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee – 15th September 2020

Item	Action to be Taken	By Whom	Action Taken
Additional Item	A Member Briefing session was requested in relation to Education and Schools during the COVID 19 Pandemic.	Democratic Team / Officers	An All Member Briefing Session – One Council COVID-19 – has been arranged for 28th September 2020. This briefing session will inform how the Council responded to the pandemic as an organisation and will include Education and Schools.
7	**Proposed Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2020/21** It was requested that any future 'Estyn Summary of School Inspection Outcomes' reports are scheduled onto the main agenda.	Michelle Jones / Scrutiny and Democratic Officer	Noted any future reports to be included on the main agenda.

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Executive Committee and Council only
Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A
Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: N/A

Committee: **Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **3rd November 2020**

Report Subject: **Forward Work Programme: 15th December 2020**

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

Report Submitted by: **Cllr Haydn Trollope, Chair of the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	**Corporate Leadership Team**	**Portfolio Holder / Chair**	**Audit Committee**	**Democratic Services Committee**	**Scrutiny Committee**	**Executive Committee**	**Council**	**Other (please state)**
x	x	19.10.20			03.11.20			

1. **Purpose of the Report**

1.1 To present to Members the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme for the Meeting on 15th December 2020 for discussion and agreement.

2. **Scope and Background**

2.1 The Scrutiny Work Programmes are key aspects of the Council's planning and governance arrangements and support the requirements of the Constitution.

2.2 The topics set out in the Forward Work Programme link to the strategic work of the Council as identified by the Council's revised Corporate Plan, corporate documents and supporting business plans.

2.3 Effective work programmes are essential to ensure that the work of scrutiny makes a positive impact upon the Council's delivery of services.

2.4 The Committee's Forward Work Programme was agreed in September 2020, recognising the fluidity of the document to enable the Committee to respond to urgent and emerging issues, and included timescales when reports will be considered by the Committee. The work programme is managed and implemented by the Scrutiny and Democratic Officer under the direction of the Chair and Committee.

2.5 The forward work programme for the forthcoming meeting will be presented to Committee on a 6 weekly cycle in order that Members can consider the programme of work; request information is included within the reports, as appropriate and / or make amendments to the work programme.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 **Option 1:** The Scrutiny Committee consider the Forward Work Programme for the meeting 15th December 2020, and
   - Make any amendments to the topics scheduled for the meetings;

- Suggest any additional invitees that the committee requires to fully consider the reports; and
- Request any additional information to be included with regards to the topics to be discussed.

3.2 **Option 2:** The Scrutiny Committee agree the Forward Programme for the meeting 15th December 2020, as presented.

Background Documents /Electronic Links
- Appendix 1 – Forward Work Programme – Meeting on 15th December 2020

2

Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme

Provisional Date / Deadlines	Scrutiny Topic	Purpose	Lead Officer	Executive / Council
Tuesday 15th December 2020 Deadline: 27th November 2020	1. Penycwm and New Build Welsh Medium Provision	**Pre Decision** To consider and recommend approval of the pre consultation report.	Claire Gardner	Executive
	2. Welsh Education Strategic Plan (WESP) Monitoring and the Development of 10 Year WESP Plan. *Please note the report and Plan will need to be translated to Welsh by the Directorate.*	**Performance Monitoring / Development** Members to review the performance of the Council and monitor the associated outcomes, whilst recognising how this monitoring can inform key strategic priorities and a new 10 year WESP.	Claire Gardner	Executive
	3. Management of Pupil Places and the School Estate 2019/20	**Performance Monitoring** To provide Members with the opportunity to scrutinise the management of pupil places and the school estate, throughout the 2019/20 academic session.	Claire Gardner	Executive Information
	4. Progress on ICT Infrastructure and Connectivity in Schools	**Progress Update** To provide Members with an update on the roll out of the ICT Infrastructure and Connectivity project across the school estate.	Lynn Phillips	Executive Information
	5. Improving Schools	**Performance Monitoring** To provide Members with an update on any inspection report findings and progress within schools which are subject to Council.	Michelle Jones	Executive

Member Briefing Sessions – Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee			
Date	**Topic**	**Purpose**	**Lead Officer**
16th November 2020	The role of the EAS	The role of the EAS in supporting LAs to deliver statutory functions of school improvement.	EAS

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Agenda Item 7

Executive Committee and Council only
Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A
Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: N/A

Committee: **Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **3rd November 2020**

Report Subject: **Outcomes 2019-2020: Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2, Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4**

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

Report Submitted by: **Lynn Phillips, Interim Corporate Director of Education**
Ed Pryce, Assistant Director EAS

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
01.1.20		19.10.20			03.11.20	09.12.20		

1. **Purpose of the Report**

   To inform members of Welsh Government: School Performance Reporting Arrangements for 2019-2020, provide an overview of national outcomes as context and provide anonymised local data where available.

   Outcomes are only available for key stage 4 in line with agreements between each LA and headteachers, made prior to the collection of the data, these should not be used for school accountability purposes.

2. **Scope and Background**

2.1 In response to the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, the Welsh Government cancelled all statutory data collections that would have been due to take place in Summer 2020. This was initially announced in the Minister for Education's written statements of 18 March 2020 and 3 July 2020 and enacted in the Relaxation of School Reporting Requirements (Wales) (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020. The latest update is included as Appendix 1: Welsh Government: School Performance Reporting Arrangements Important Update (10 August 2020).

2.2 **Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2, Key Stage 3**

   The School Performance Information (Wales) Regulations 2011 has been amended to remove the duties on governing bodies and local authorities to provide data to local authorities and Welsh Ministers, respectively, on teacher assessment outcomes and authorised or unauthorised absence for the pupils registered at schools in the 2019/20 school year.

This means that no end of phase / key stage data was submitted, therefore, no data is available for this report. Many schools will have made their own internal assessments of learners, but these will have been undertaken 'virtually' and there will have been no moderation processes, therefore even if submitted, would not be suitable for any form of meaningful analysis.

2.3 **Key Stage 4**

Outcomes this year should not be used for school accountability purposes, in line with agreements between each LA and their headteachers made prior to the collection of the data.

Due to the cancellation of summer 2020 GCSE, AS and A level examination, the Welsh Government will not be reporting on school performance measures for 2019/20 or providing All Wales Core Data Sets. Following the provision of this year's centre estimated grades by schools, the school performance information regulations have been disapplied to remove the requirements for the usual flows of performance data between headteachers, governing bodies, local authorities and the Welsh Government. This means that schools and governing bodies should not include school performance measures in any published report. It will not be appropriate to make year-on-year comparisons of this information or consider it as part of trend data in inspection and accountability activities.

The content of this scrutiny report is intended to provide a contextual view of anonymised school outcomes, rather than analyse performance at Local Authority (LA) or individual level. It cannot contain any aggregated LA data, or individual school performance data, other than anonymised school level data for key stage 4.

It is important that the information below is used sensitively during these unprecedented times. The information should be used within the context of a wider range of information and a range of regional processes that the local authority will use to evaluate individual school performance.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

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

3.2 **Option 1**

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.

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

4.   **Blaenau Gwent Wellbeing Plan**

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 (short and long term impact)*

There are no direct financial implications for this report. Blaenau Gwent continues to make a financial contribution to the regional Education Achievement Service (EAS) arrangements of approximately £300,000 per annum.

As a part of the Council's arrangements for intervention in schools in line with the South East Wales Consortium (SEWC) framework, there are occasions when additional funding is required to support schools through the use of external agencies particularly, when an adverse inspection report is received. Any funding required is allocated from within current budgets within the Education Directorate portfolio.

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.

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.

In the light of the current Pandemic the established management of risk processes has had to respond to the context in which we found ourselves with business as usual activities being suspended from 24th March 2020.

However, with the commencement of the new academic year routine business processes are being re-established but naturally these will be kept under review as Wave 2 of the Pandemic progresses as learner and staff wellbeing is of paramount importance.

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

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

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 albeit in a virtual world.

5.3 *Legal*

This report provides information about present statutory, end of Phase and Key Stage school performance arrangements in the light of the Pandemic and as such is completely different to previous reports presented to this Committee.

5.4 *Human Resources*

It is acknowledged that the changes to the awarding of qualifications during 2019-20 academic year had significant implications for centre assessment staff in awarding centre assessment grades as a result of the decision for the routine examinations not to take place. It is noted that this work occurred at a time when schools were re-purposed and were providing essential child care to key worker and vulnerable children at the height of Wave 1 of the Pandemic.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 *Performance Information and Data*

6.1.1 The WJEC data reports on overall GCSE / GCE A Level pass rates. It cannot report at individual pupil level, as schools do, as not all the data would be available. For example, some vocational qualifications, which would be included in each individual learner's 'points scores' for some measures, may not be accessible to the WJEC. For definitions of how each measure is calculated see Appendix 1 and subsection Appendix 2.

6.1.2 Because of these variations it is not possible to directly compare like for like, year on year progress. What is clear however is that at key stage 4, there have been significant increases in the percentage of A*-C grades awarded.
Despite not being able to directly compare, it is clear that within the national context this year, we would expect to see significant increases in individual school outcomes. It is not possible using outcomes alone to determine whether this represents sustainable improvement.

6.1.3 Qualifications Wales have provided an initial analysis of national outcomes Results for A Level, AS, GCSE and the Skills Challenge Certificate in Wales – Summer 2020. This has been included as Appendix 3, but a sample of changes for a selection of national indictors are included in the charts below.

6.1.4 **Key Stage 4 – GCSE – Grade C and above**

Figure 7.2: National GCSE summer cumulative C/4 results 2010-2020[1)(2)]
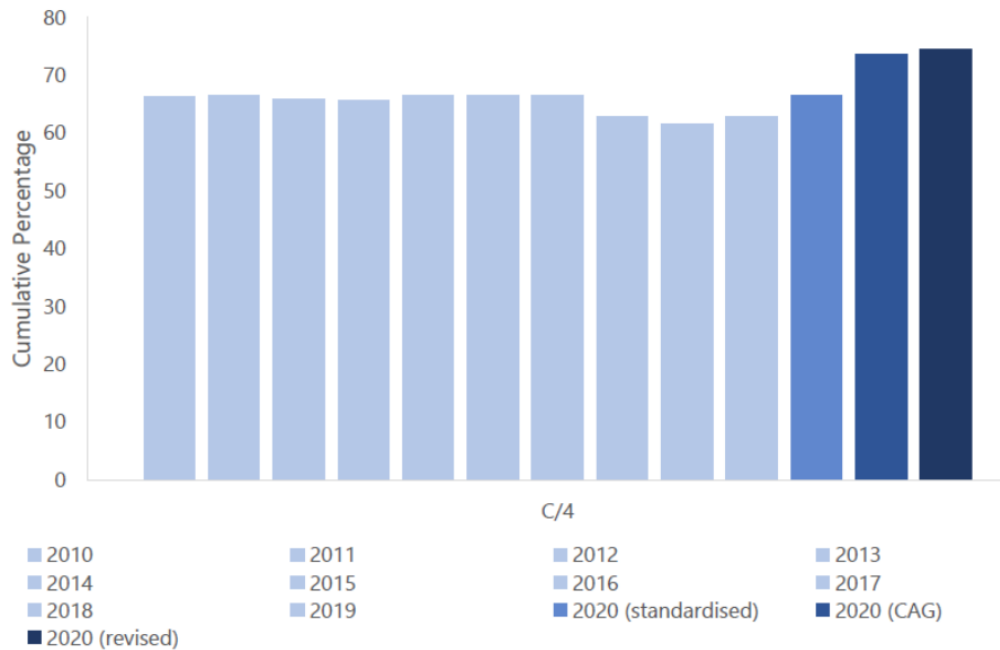
Between 2010 and 2016 overall grades C and above remained stable at approximately 65%. Over the next 2 years this declined to approximately 61%, before increasing to approximately 75% in 2020.

6.1.5 **Summary of Outcomes**

Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2, Key Stage 3

As explained in the context section, no data has been submitted.

Key Stage 4

Outcomes on the 5 Welsh Government measures and 2 legacy measures was requested and 5A*-A was requested.

- The Capped 9 measure
- Literacy measure
- Numeracy measure
- Science measure
- Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge Certificate measure
- Percentage of learners achieved 5 A*-A GCSE

The reported outcomes are based on revised results, following the Welsh Government decision to award the best of 'Standardised Grade' and 'Centre Assessed Grade' for each individual learner.

6.1.6 **Summary of LA Outcomes**

The tables below provide an overview of performance for the schools in the LA, compared with regional lowest, median and highest for 2020 (anonymised and non-aggregated).

The first table is sorted from highest to lowest Capped 9 outcomes. Each row represents a single school.

School	Capped Point 9	Average points for best of Literature or first Language Welsh or English GCSE	Average points for best of Mathematics or Mathematics - Numeracy GCSE	Average points for best Science GCSE	Average points for Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge Certificate	L1 Threshold	5 A*-As
School 1	378	39	37	38	42	96	15
School 2	376	41	35	36	39	99	19
School 3	358	40	38	36	39	95	20
School 4	356	36	37	32	41	95	15
Region 2020							
Highest	422	46	47	46	48	100	41
Median	376	41	39	38	41	97	21
Lowest	318	35	34	30	31	87	10

The second table is sorted from highest to lowest Capped 9 outcomes for FSM pupils. Each row represents a single school.

School	Capped 9		Average points for best of Literature or first Language Welsh or English GCSE		Average points for best of Mathematics or Mathematics - Numeracy GCSE		Average points for best Science GCSE		Average points for Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge Certificate		L1 Threshold		5 A*-As	
	eFSM	Non	eFSM	Non	eFSM	Non	eFSM	Non	eFSM	Non	eFSM	Non	eFSM	Non
School 1	358	400	39	43	31	39	33	40	34	43	97	99	8	18
School 2	341	389	33	41	31	39	30	41	38	43	91	98	7	23
School 3	329	363	32	37	32	38	28	33	41	41	88	97	4	17
School 4	307	374	35	41	34	39	30	38	33	41	87	97	10	23
Region 2020														
Highest	395	426	44	47	43	47	42	46	44	49	100	100	48	42
Median	329	389	36	42	33	40	31	40	35	41	93	98	9	23
Lowest	272	331	28	36	26	37	23	33	27	30	50	31	0	8

6.2 *Expected outcome for the public*

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. However, for 2020 /21 the categorisation process has been suspended and new strategies have been deployed to ensure appropriate support is in place to schools at this time and are in train.

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 *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)*
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. However, it is recognised that the performance this year is purely for information only.

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 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.

6.6 *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.

6.7 *Integration (across service areas)*
Ensuring that schools deliver high quality education provision to secure high pupil outcomes relates directly to the priorities within the revised Corporate Improvement

Plan so that children's and young peoples' learning and achievement levels are maximised, and 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   *EqIA*
As the 2020 examination arrangements were revised in the light of the Pandemic an EQIA has been completed for this report and no positive or negative impact has been identified.

7.   **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1   Monitoring of improvement pathways is an important mechanism for ensuring that members of the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee and the Executive Committee although, it is accepted that the performance information within the report is for information only and not part of accountability arrangements.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- **Appendix 1 - 2**

- **Appendix 3**

Report content for Scrutiny: Blaenau Gwent

Report Title: Outcomes 2019-2020: Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2, Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4

Introduction and Context

In response to the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, the Welsh Government cancelled all statutory data collections that would have been due to take place in Summer 2020. This was initially announced in the Minister for Education's written statements of 18 March 2020 and 3 July 2020 and enacted in the Relaxation of School Reporting Requirements (Wales) (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020. The latest update is shown below. Welsh Government: School Performance Reporting Arrangements Important Update (10 August 2020).

Appendix 1: Welsh Government: School Performance Reporting Arrangements Important Update (10 August 2020)

https://gov.wales/school-performance-reporting-arrangements-important-update-0

As set out in Written Statements dated 18 March 2020 and 3 July 2020, the Minister for Education has announced changes to the publication of qualification awards data and performance measures due to coronavirus.

In addition, The Relaxation of School Reporting Requirements (Wales) (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020 have been made to reduce burden on schools and local authorities for 2019/20.

What are the key points?

- We have suspended the calculation and publication of Key Stage 4 and legacy sixth form performance measures for the 2019 to 2020 and 2020 to 2021 academic years.

- Qualification awards data will not be used to report on attainment outcomes at a school, local authority or regional consortium level and must not be used to hold schools to account for their learners' outcomes.

- Post-16 performance measures have also been suspended for 2019/20. We will consider the best approach for 2020 to 2021, in view of the range of providers and different types of programmes that are affected in different ways. The sector will be consulted, before any firm decision is taken, in order to consider what would be useful to help their own monitoring and quality assurance processes.

- There will be a direct impact on the usual data releases provided by the Welsh Government, with some releases suspended for one or both years and/or still to be determined for 2020 to 2021. You can find a table below showing what information, with provisional timings, will be released by the Welsh Government. Where activities are marked to continue for 2020/21 reporting, this is the planning assumption at the time of publication, which could be subject to change if these are affected by further disruption to school operations.

- All schools and post-16 providers will continue to be required to undertake effective self-evaluation to support continuous improvement. Our evaluation, improvement and accountability arrangements require consideration of a broad range of information relevant to a school's own context when undertaking self-evaluation and identifying improvement priorities. This will involve schools, with support from local authorities and regional consortia, using the learner level information they have on attainment and other outcomes to reflect on and improve their existing arrangements.

- The Relaxation of School Reporting Requirements (Wales) (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020 came into force on 7 August 2020. These Regulations revoke one set of Regulations and amend a number of others, which place duties on headteachers, governing bodies and local authorities to produce pupil and school reports:

Regulations	Description of Regulations	Impact of Amending Regulations	Further details
The School Performance and Absence Targets (Wales) Regulations 2011	Require schools to set and publish targets which are agreed by local authorities.	Revoked	No longer required.
The Head Teachers' Reports to Parents and Adult Pupils (Wales) Regulations 2011	Require headteachers to make a report available to all parents or adult pupils about the educational achievements of pupils, each school year.	Amended (to a "reasonable endeavours" basis)	Duties imposed on headteachers for reports relating to the 2019/20 school year are to be treated as discharged, if the headteacher has used reasonable endeavours to discharge the duty. The exception to "reasonable endeavours" is regulation 5(1) of the Reporting Regulations; the requirement to provide a school leaver's report, which needs to remain an absolute duty, so that this cohort of learners are not disadvantaged this year.
The School Information (Wales) Regulations 2011	Require local authorities to publish a composite school prospectus and schools to publish their own individual prospectus, and	Amended	Provision made to exclude data on authorised and unauthorised absences in respect of pupils registered at the school in the 2019/20 school year from being published in any school prospectus.

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	prescribes the school information that must be included		
The School Governors' Annual Reports (Wales) Regulations 2011	Require school governing bodies to produce an annual report, including information about school performance against published targets.	Amended	Modified the content of reports produced in relation to the 2019/20 academic year so that information may not be included in any school governors' report. The statutory duty for governing bodies to produce a report will remain. Information to be disapplied/excluded in relation to pupils registered at the school in the 2019/20 school year: *the most recent Summary of Secondary School Performance (SSSP); *the number of authorised and unauthorised absences in the school year; and *any information in relation to performance and absence targets, including improvements set by the governing body in respect of performance of learners, or for reducing the level of absence.
The School Performance Information (Wales) Regulations 2011	Provide for the reporting of teacher assessment and examination outcomes (from schools and governing bodies to local authorities and Welsh Ministers).	Amended	Removes the duties on governing bodies and local authorities to provide data to local authorities and Welsh Ministers, respectively, on teacher assessment outcomes and authorised or unauthorised absence for the pupils registered at schools in the 2019/20 school year.

Appendix 2: Definitions of the 5 Welsh Government Measures

The Capped 9 measure:
- Average of the scores for the best awards for all individual pupils in the cohort, capped at a specified volume of GCSEs or equivalent qualifications. In 2019, the interim measures version will remain capped at 9 GCSEs or equivalent.
- Three of the nine slots are for specific subjects and qualifications - one GCSE in size:
    - The best grade from any of the literature or first language Welsh or English GCSEs.
    - The best grade from either of the mathematics or mathematics – numeracy GCSEs.
    - The best grade from a science GSCE (currently this is limited to awards in the WJEC suite of science GCSE qualifications: biology, chemistry, physics, science (double award) applied science (double award) and applied science (single award)
- For each learner, the remaining six slots will reflect the points attached to their best six qualifications other than those awards that are contributing towards the subject-specific slots. There is no limit to the range of vocational qualifications that can contribute, to these none-subject specific slots.
- The Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge Certificate qualification will count towards a non-subject-specific slot of the Capped 9 measure where it features in a pupil's best results.

The literacy measure:
- Average of the scores for all pupils in the cohort, taking the best grade from any of the literature or first language Welsh or English GCSEs awarded to a pupil.

The numeracy measure:
- Average of the scores for all pupils in the cohort, taking the best grade from either of the mathematics or mathematics – numeracy GCSEs awarded to a pupil.

The science measure:
- Average of the scores for all pupils in the cohort, taking the best grade from a science GCSE awarded to a learner (currently this is limited to awards in the WJEC suite of science GCSE qualifications available to learners: biology, chemistry, physics, science (double award) applied science (double award) and applied science (single award).

The Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge Certificate measure:
- Performance measure calculating the average of the scores for the Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge Certificate awards for all pupils in the cohort, whether it is the Foundation (Level 1) or the National (Level 2) award.

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Appendix 3: Results for A Level, AS, GCSE and the Skills Challenge Certificate in Wales – Summer 2020.

Provided as a separate .pdf document.

https://qualificationswales.org/media/6483/gq-summer-overview-revised-4-september-eng.pdf

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Results for
A level, AS, GCSE and the Skills Challenge Certificate in Wales – Summer 2020

Overview

1. Contents

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2. Introduction

On 17 August Welsh Government [announced] that centre assessment grades would be awarded to learners for GCSE, AS, A level and Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge Certificate qualifications in summer 2020.

On 23 August we published an overview of revised provisional[1] results for A level, AS, GCSE and the Skills Challenge Certificate in Wales. These statistics were estimates based on the latest data available to us. This document has now been updated again with expanded analysis based on the latest data.

JCQ are due to publish final provisional results w/c 10 September.

Although final results this summer will be based on the centre assessment grades, it was also announced that:

- Standardised A level and AS grades already awarded to learners that were higher than centre assessment grades would stand. We have accounted for those grades in the revised results figures in this analysis and in the analysis published on 20 August.
- For A levels, any AS grade already awarded to learners would be given as the A level grade, if this was higher than either the centre assessment grade or the standardised grade for A level. In the analysis published on 20 August we were not able to account for these grades. This analysis does account for them.
- GCSE standardised grades will be awarded to learners where they exceed the centre assessment grade. This was accounted for in our analysis of 20 August and in this analysis. In this analysis, we have now included comparisons of revised results to the standardised grades that would originally have been published for GCSE on 20 August.

For all qualifications we have included comparisons based on what the results would have been if the centre assessment grades alone had been used to award grades to learners in summer 2020.

3. Data

Figures for grades in 2020 are estimated based on latest data submitted to Qualifications Wales by awarding bodies. The revised final results in this publication may be calculated using a slightly different subset of results compared to final JCQ published figures for 2020.

Attainment gaps are calculated as the cumulative percentage point difference in results between categories of learners at each grade. So, for example, gender attainment gaps are calculated as the female cumulative percentage results minus

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[1] Results published in August are always provisional in that they are prior to reviews and appeals.

male cumulative percentage results. As the attainment gap statistics are calculated from estimated national results, these statistics may need revision once final national results are available. The attainment gap statistics in this report are reported on the basis of differences in grades between groups of learners.

National results from previous years and the original results published in 2020 for A level and AS are presented from published JCQ tables. For GCSE, the national results and gender attainment gap figures from previous years are from published JCQ tables.

Figures for analysis by eligibility for free school meals (FSM), special educational needs (SEN) provision and ethnic background are from the Welsh Examination Database and Pupil Level Annual School Census (WEDPLASC) data. These figures have been calculated using only centres that are common to both historical WEDPLASC data and 2020 awarding body data, so only maintained schools are included. The analyses by eligibility for free school meals, SEN provision and ethnic background have also been carried out only for the main entry cohort by age (16-year-olds for GCSE, 17-year-olds for AS and 18-year-olds for A level) and only for learners for whom there is available data to classify them. Due to limitations in the data available to us at this time for A level and AS, the attainment gaps by FSM and SEN status may be more subject to further revision. Attainment gaps by ethnic background have not been presented for A level and AS due to issues linked to small sample sizes. Analysis of this data will follow in a more detailed statistical publication focused on 2020 results and equalities impact.

4. Definitions

Results labelled as '2020 (revised)' are best estimates of final national results. These figures may be calculated using a slightly different subset of results compared to final JCQ published figures for 2020.

Results labelled as '2020 (standardised)' are the results that were calculated by the standardisation model. For A level, AS and the Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate, these are the calculated results released on 13 August. For GCSE and the Key Stage 4 Skills Challenge Certificate, these are the results that were due to be published on 23 August before the decision to base results on centre assessment grades.

Results labelled as '2020 (CAG)' are the results that would have been awarded if only centre assessment grades had been used.

For attainment gaps by SEN provision, learners with an SEN provision status of 'statemented', 'school action' or 'school action plus' are all included in the 'On SEN register' category.

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Results by ethnic background are categorised into broad ethnic groups in line with Government Statistical Service advice[2]. The "unknown or not stated" category refers only to learners for whom ethnicity data was available and where the available data lists the learner's ethnic background as "Unknown or not stated". Learners for whom we do not hold any data relating to ethnic background have not been included in the analysis.
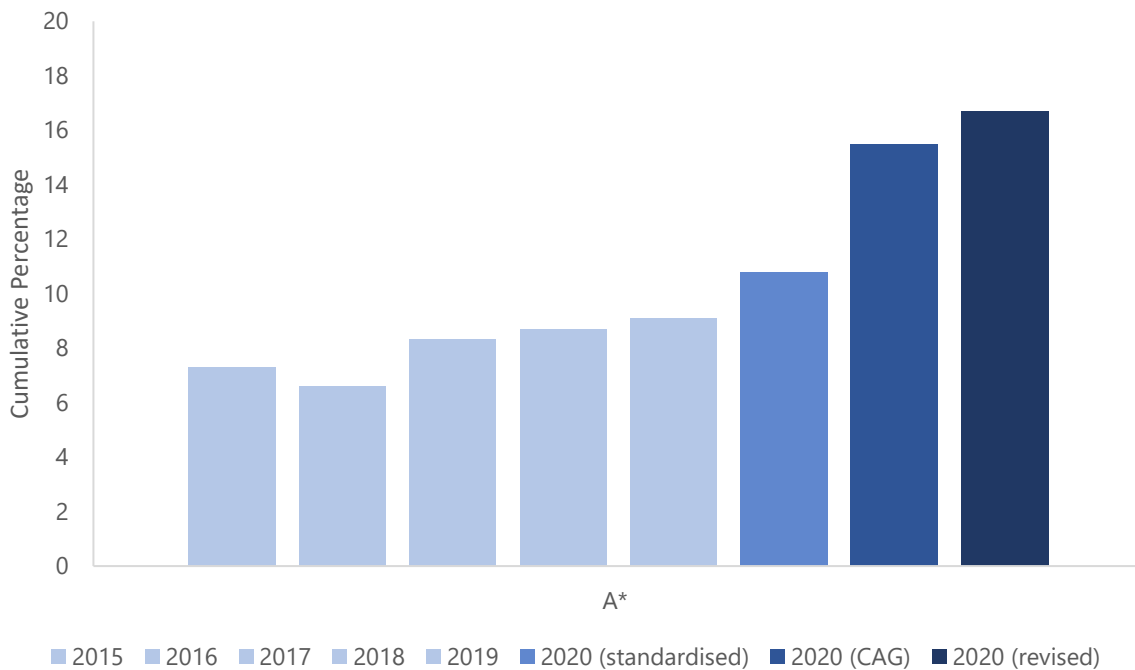
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[2] https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/policy-store/ethnicity/#questions-wales-

5. A level

National results

Table 5.1 shows that revised results are higher than the standardised A level grades, and also substantially higher than results between 2015 and 2019. The majority of this increase is due to the centre assessment grades.

Figure 5.2 shows that well over 40% of learners will be awarded A* or A in 2020 in the revised results, whereas in 2019 the figure was 27% (which was the highest for the period 2015-2019 inclusive). The figure in the standardised grades was 29.9%.

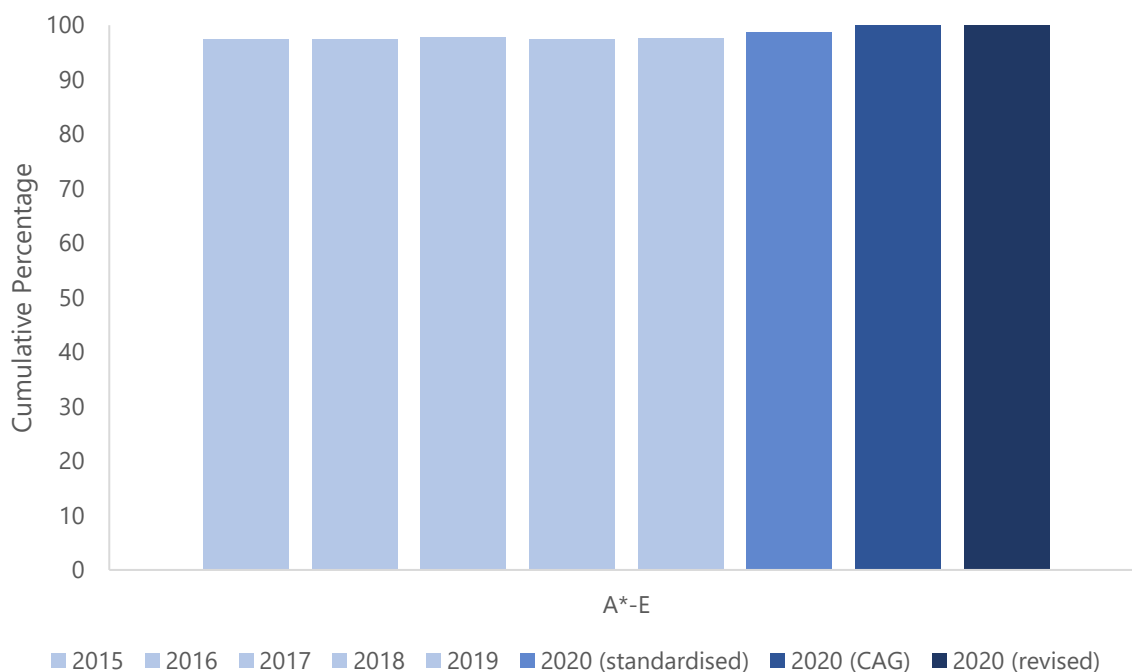**Figure 5.1: National A level summer A* results 2015-2020**

Source: 2015 to 2019 and 2020 (standardised): JCQ; 2020 (CAG) and 2020 (revised): awarding bodies

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Figure 5.2: National A level summer cumulative A results 2015-2020
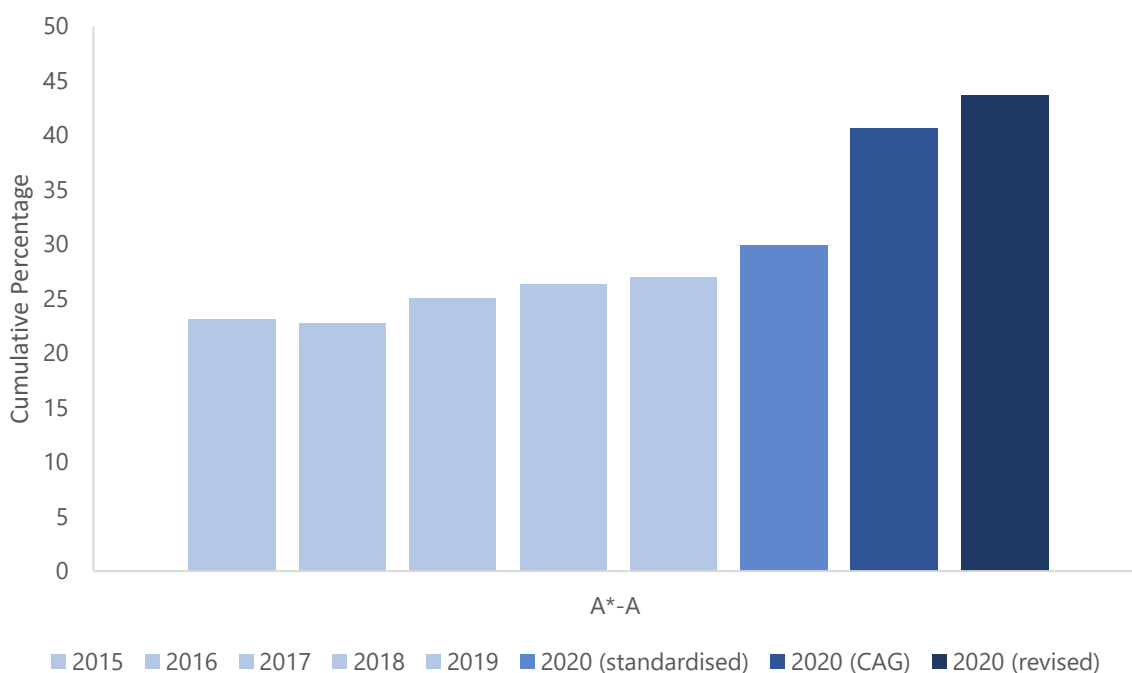
Source: 2015 to 2019 and 2020 (standardised): JCQ; 2020 (CAG) and 2020 (revised): awarding bodies

Figure 5.3: National A level summer cumulative E results 2015-2020

Source: 2015 to 2019 and 2020 (standardised): JCQ; 2020 (CAG) and 2020 (revised): awarding bodies

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Table 5.1: A level Results 2015-2020 (cumulative percentage)

	A*	A*-A	A*-E	Number of grades
2020 (revised)[2]	16.7	43.7	99.9	30,510[1]
2020 (CAG)[2]	15.5	40.6	99.9	30,350[3]
2020 (standardised)[2]	10.8	29.9	98.6	30,450
2019	9.1	27.0	97.6	31,485
2018	8.7	26.3	97.4	32,445
2017	8.3	25.0	97.7	33,295
2016	6.6	22.7	97.3	35,535
2015	7.3	23.1	97.3	36,035

Source: 2015 to 2020 (standardised): JCQ; 2020 (CAG) and 2020 (revised): awarding bodies

(1) This figure may differ to previously published figures due to differing timing of data extracts.

(2) Standardised results were those released on 13 August. CAG are the centre assessed grades. Revised are the higher of the centre assessment grade, standardised grade or AS grade based on data received from awarding bodies. Final published results may differ from revised estimates.

(3) The number of centre assessment grades is lower than the final number of grades due to instances where the CAG had not been finalised at point the data was submitted, or where a CAG was not submitted but a grade could still be awarded based on prior unit attainment.

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Attainment gap by gender

Figure 5.4 shows that attainment gaps by gender at cumulative A*-A are wider in revised results compared to the standardised A level grades. They are also wider than the attainment gaps in results between 2015 and 2019.

Attainment gaps by gender at cumulative A*, A*-C and A*-E are narrower.

Due to the overall increase in national results, both boys and girls have higher revised results in 2020 than in 2019. However, results for girls have increased by more than results for boys at the top end of the grade distribution.

Figure 5.4: A level attainment gap in cumulative results by gender
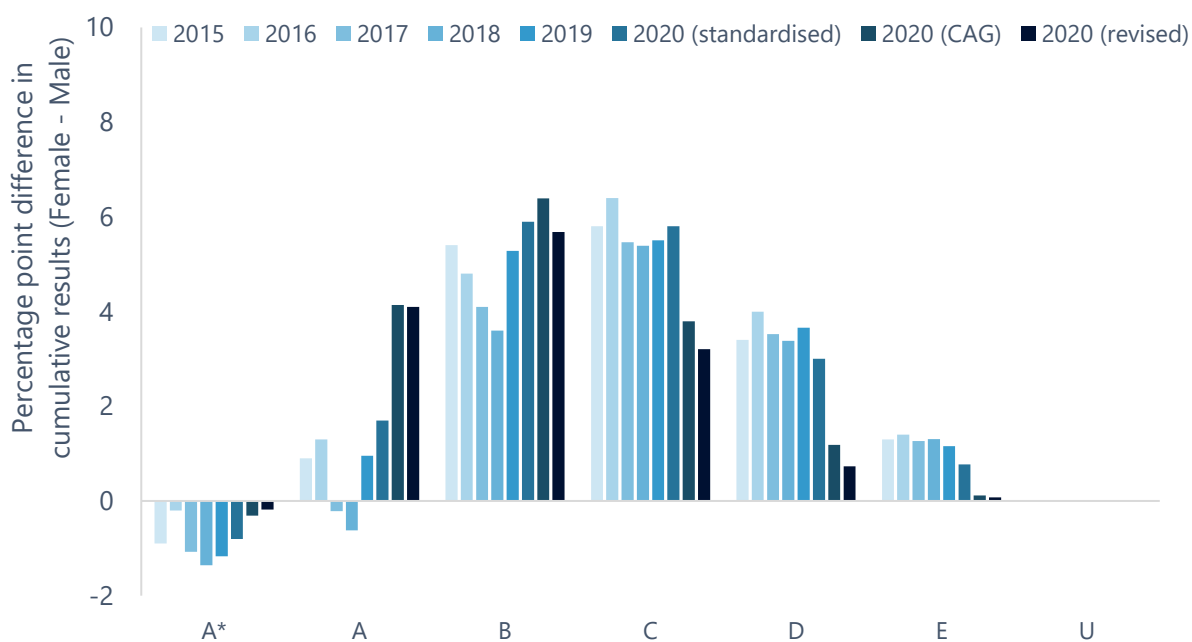
Source: 2015 to 2019 and 2020 (standardised): JCQ; 2020 (CAG) and 2020 (revised): awarding bodies

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Table 5.2: A level cumulative percentage results by gender and percentage point attainment gaps

Year	Gender	Grades	A*	A	B	C	D	E	U
2015	Girls	19,960	6.9	23.5	51.4	76.9	91.7	97.9	100.0
2015	Boys	16,075	7.8	22.6	46.0	71.1	88.3	96.6	100.0
2015	Gap (Girls - Boys)		-0.9	0.9	5.4	5.8	3.4	1.3	0.0
2016	Girls	20,030	6.5	23.3	50.2	76.6	91.8	97.9	100.0
2016	Boys	15,510	6.7	22.0	45.4	70.2	87.8	96.5	100.0
2016	Gap (Girls - Boys)		-0.2	1.3	4.8	6.4	4.0	1.4	0.0
2017	Girls	18,615	7.8	24.9	51.9	77.7	92.4	98.2	100.0
2017	Boys	14,675	8.9	25.1	47.8	72.3	88.9	97.0	100.0
2017	Gap (Girls - Boys)		-1.1	-0.2	4.1	5.5	3.5	1.3	0.0
2018	Girls	18,160	8.1	26.0	53.6	78.7	92.5	98.0	100.0
2018	Boys	14,285	9.4	26.6	50.0	73.3	89.1	96.7	100.0
2018	Gap (Girls - Boys)		-1.4	-0.6	3.6	5.4	3.4	1.3	0.0
2019	Girls	17,845	8.6	27.4	54.7	78.7	92.9	98.1	100.0
2019	Boys	13,640	9.8	26.5	49.4	73.2	89.2	96.9	100.0
2019	Gap (Girls - Boys)		-1.2	1.0	5.3	5.5	3.7	1.2	0.0
2020 (standardised)	Girls	17,100	10.5	30.7	58.7	82.3	94.8	99.0	100.0
2020 (standardised)	Boys	13,345	11.3	28.9	52.8	76.5	91.8	98.2	100.0
2020 (standardised)	Gap (Girls - Boys)		-0.8	1.7	5.9	5.8	3.0	0.8	0.0
2020 (CAG)	Girls	17,055	15.4	42.4	71.3	91.8	98.5	99.9	100.0
2020 (CAG)	Boys	13,295	15.7	38.3	64.9	88.0	97.3	99.8	100.0
2020 (CAG)	Gap (Girls – Boys)		-0.3	4.1	6.4	3.8	1.2	0.1	0.0
2020 (revised)[1]	Girls	17,130	16.6	45.5	74.5	93.9	99.2	100.0	100.0
2020 (revised)[1]	Boys	13,375	16.8	41.4	68.8	90.7	98.5	99.9	100.0
2020 (revised)[1]	Gap (Girls - Boys)		-0.2	4.1	5.7	3.2	0.7	0.1	0.0

Source: 2015 to 2020 (standardised): JCQ; 2020 (CAG) and 2020 (revised): awarding bodies

NB the attainment gap has been calculated from unrounded figures and therefore may not be exactly equal to the difference between the rounded figures.

(1) Revised are the higher of the centre assessment grade, standardised grade or AS grade based on data received from awarding bodies. Final published results may differ from revised estimates.

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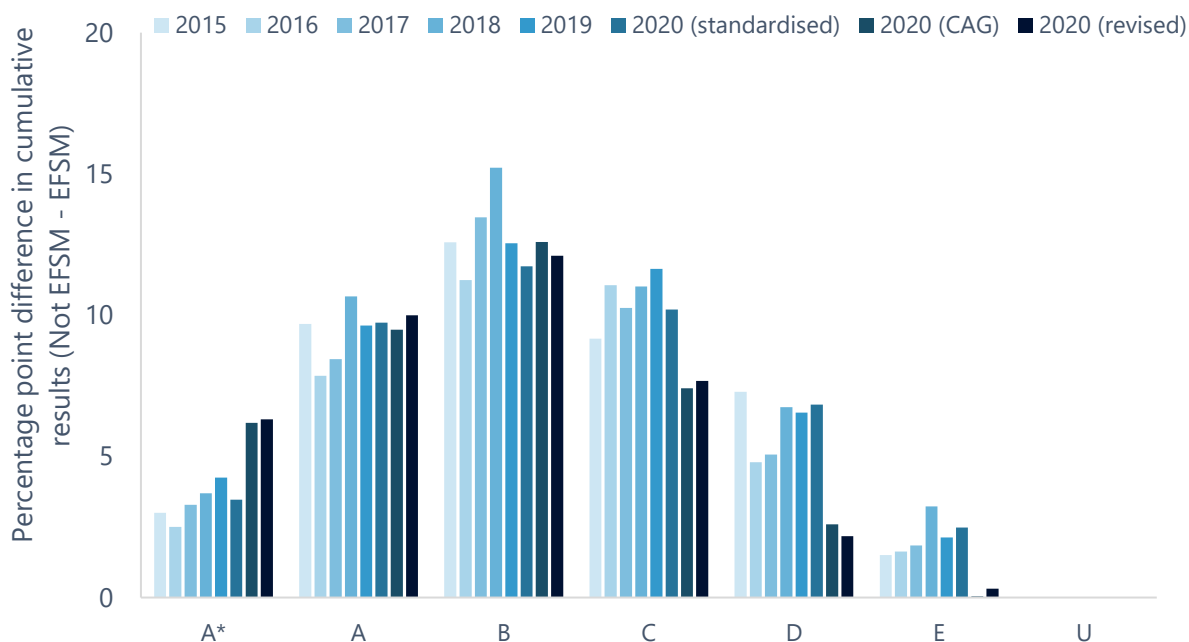**Attainment gap by eligibility for free school meals (18-year-olds)**

For 18-year-olds, the main A level entry cohort, attainment gaps by eligibility for free school meals at A* are higher for revised results compared to the standardised A level grades. The gap at A* is also wider than in results between 2015 and 2019.

Attainment gaps at cumulative A*-A are similar, whilst the gaps are narrower at cumulative grades A*-C and A*-E.

Due to the overall increase in national results, those eligible for free school meals and those not eligible have higher revised results in 2020 than in 2019. However, increases in A* grades are larger in the revised results for those who are not eligible for free school meals.

It is important to note that the free school meal eligibility data is not available for all learners and where it is available it may not be data from the current year.

Figure 5.5: A level attainment gap in cumulative results by eligibility for free school meals, 18-year-olds[1]

Source: 2015 to 2019: WEDPLASC; 2020: awarding bodies

(1) Includes data only for those centres present in both the 2020 WJEC data and previous WEDPLASC data

Table 5.3: A level cumulative percentage results by eligibility for free school meals and percentage point attainment gaps, 18-year-olds

Year	FSM	Grades	A*	A	B	C	D	E	U
2015	Eligible	805	3.5	12.7	36.6	65.6	83.4	96.0	100.0
2015	Non-eligible	20,875	6.5	22.3	49.2	74.8	90.7	97.5	100.0
2015	Gap (NotEFSM - EFSM)		3.0	9.7	12.6	9.2	7.3	1.5	0.0
2016	Eligible	885	3.4	14.0	36.8	63.1	85.3	95.7	100.0
2016	Non-eligible	20,710	5.9	21.9	48.1	74.1	90.1	97.3	100.0
2016	Gap (NotEFSM - EFSM)		2.5	7.9	11.2	11.1	4.8	1.6	0.0
2017	Eligible	920	3.6	14.8	35.6	64.3	85.5	95.9	100.0
2017	Non-eligible	19,750	6.9	23.2	49.0	74.6	90.6	97.7	100.0
2017	Gap (NotEFSM - EFSM)		3.3	8.4	13.5	10.3	5.1	1.8	0.0
2018	Eligible	1,010	4.1	14.5	35.8	64.6	84.1	94.4	100.0
2018	Non-eligible	18,760	7.8	25.1	51.1	75.6	90.8	97.6	100.0
2018	Gap (NotEFSM - EFSM)		3.7	10.7	15.2	11.0	6.7	3.2	0.0
2019	Eligible	780	4.2	16.0	39.0	64.1	84.5	95.5	100.0
2019	Non-eligible	18,450	8.5	25.7	51.6	75.7	91.0	97.6	100.0
2019	Gap (NotEFSM - EFSM)		4.2	9.6	12.5	11.6	6.5	2.1	0.0
2020 (standardised)	Eligible	865	5.3	16.6	41.4	67.7	85.9	95.9	100.0
2020 (standardised)	Non-eligible	17,810	8.6	26.1	53.1	77.9	92.7	98.4	100.0
2020 (standardised)	Gap (NotEFSM - EFSM)		3.3	9.6	11.6	10.1	6.8	2.5	0.0
2020 (CAG)	Eligible	865	7.5	29.6	55.6	83.2	95.6	99.9	100.0
2020 (CAG)	Non-eligible	17,780	13.7	39.1	68.1	90.6	98.2	99.9	100.0
2020 (CAG)	Gap (NotEFSM – EFSM)		6.2	9.5	12.6	7.4	2.6	0.0	0.0
2020 (revised)[1]	Eligible	870	8.6	31.8	59.0	84.9	96.8	99.7	100.0
2020 (revised)[1]	Non-eligible	17,835	14.9	41.8	71.1	92.6	98.9	100.0	100.0
2020 (revised)[1]	Gap (NotEFSM - EFSM)		6.3	10.0	12.1	7.7	2.2	0.3	0.0

Source: 2015 to 2019: WEDPLASC; 2020: awarding bodies

NB the attainment gap has been calculated from unrounded figures and therefore may not be exactly equal to the difference between the rounded figures.

(1) Revised are the higher of the centre assessment grade, standardised grade or AS grade based on data received from awarding bodies. Final published results may differ from revised estimates.

Attainment gap by age

Figure 5.6 presents cumulative attainment gaps by age over time.

In recent years, 18-year-olds generally received higher A level outcomes than other learners. Revised 2020 outcomes show the attainment gap reversed at grades A* to C, so that non-18-year-olds receive better outcomes than 18-year-olds in 2020. This pattern was even more evident in the centre assessment grades and the standardised results published on the 13 August.

Figure 5.6: A level attainment gap in cumulative results by age[1]
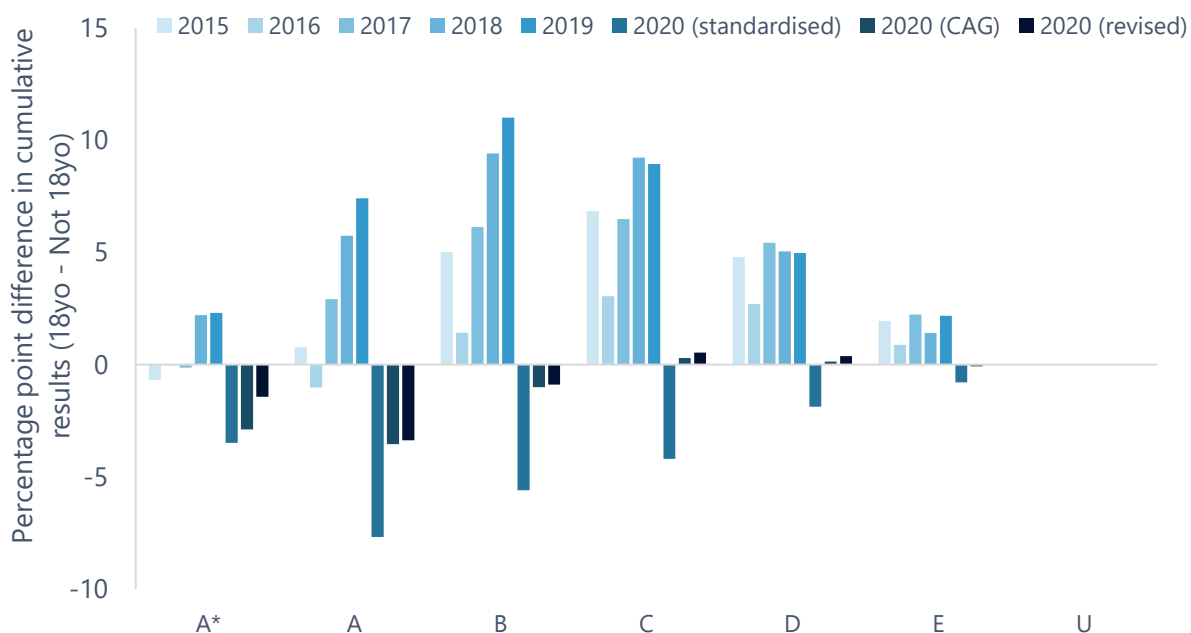
Source: 2015 to 2019: WEDPLASC; 2020: awarding bodies

(1) Includes data only for those centres present in both the 2020 awarding body data and previous WEDPLASC data

Table 5.4: A level cumulative percentage results by age and percentage point attainment gaps

Year	Age	Grades	A*	A	B	C	D	E	U
2015	18yo	23,485	7.4	24.1	50.7	75.6	90.9	97.6	100.0
2015	Non18yo	2,235	8.0	23.3	45.7	68.8	86.1	95.7	100.0
2015	Gap (18yo - Non18yo)		-0.7	0.8	5.0	6.8	4.8	1.9	0.0
2016	18yo	23,320	6.6	23.4	49.5	74.8	90.4	97.4	100.0
2016	Non18yo	2,275	6.6	24.5	48.1	71.8	87.7	96.5	100.0
2016	Gap (18yo - Non18yo)		0.0	-1.0	1.4	3.0	2.7	0.9	0.0
2017	18yo	20,665	6.7	22.9	48.4	74.1	90.4	97.6	100.0
2017	Non18yo	1,370	6.9	20.0	42.3	67.6	84.9	95.4	100.0
2017	Gap (18yo - Non18yo)		-0.1	2.9	6.1	6.5	5.4	2.2	0.0
2018	18yo	19,770	7.6	24.6	50.3	75.0	90.5	97.4	100.0
2018	Non18yo	1,530	5.4	18.8	40.9	65.8	85.4	96.0	100.0
2018	Gap (18yo - Non18yo)		2.2	5.7	9.4	9.2	5.0	1.4	0.0
2019	18yo	19,230	8.3	25.3	51.1	75.2	90.7	97.6	100.0
2019	Non18yo	1,230	6.0	17.9	40.0	66.3	85.8	95.4	100.0
2019	Gap (18yo - Non18yo)		2.3	7.4	11.0	8.9	5.0	2.2	0.0
2020 (standardised)	18yo	20,425	9.8	28.0	54.5	78.5	92.8	98.4	100.0
2020 (standardised)	Non18yo	1,730	13.3	35.6	60.1	82.7	94.7	99.2	100.0
2020 (standardised)	Gap (18yo - Non18yo)		-3.5	-7.7	-5.6	-4.2	-1.9	-0.8	0.0
2020 (CAG)	18yo	20,390	14.8	40.6	69.1	90.8	98.2	99.9	100.0
2020 (CAG)	Non18yo	1,675	17.7	44.1	70.1	90.5	98.0	100.0	100.0
2020 (CAG)	Gap (18yo - Non18yo)		-2.9	-3.5	-1.0	0.3	0.1	-0.1	0.0
2020 (revised)[1]	18yo	20,455	16.0	43.1	71.8	92.6	98.9	100.0	100.0
2020 (revised)[1]	Non18yo	1,740	17.5	46.5	72.7	92.1	98.5	99.9	100.0
2020 (revised)[1]	Gap (18yo - Non18yo)		-1.4	-3.4	-0.9	0.5	0.4	0.0	0.0

Source: 2015 to 2019: WEDPLASC; 2020: awarding bodies

NB the attainment gap has been calculated from unrounded figures and therefore may not be exactly equal to the difference between the rounded figures

(1)   Revised are the higher of the centre assessment grade, standardised grade or AS grade based on data received from awarding bodies. Final published results may differ from revised estimates.

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**Attainment gap by special educational needs (SEN) provision (18-year-olds)**

For 18-year-olds, who are the main A level entry cohort, attainment gaps by SEN provision at A* and A*-A are wider in revised results compared to results in recent years and the standardised results

The gaps are narrower at cumulative grades A*-C and A*-E.

Due to the overall increase in national results, learners with SEN provision and those without have higher revised results in 2020 than in 2019. However, increases in A* grades are larger in the revised results for those who have no SEN provision.

It is important to note that the SEN provision data is not available for all learners and where it is available it may not be data from the current year. SEN provision data is only available from 2017 onwards.

Figure 5.7: A level attainment gap in cumulative results by SEN provision, 18-year-olds[1]
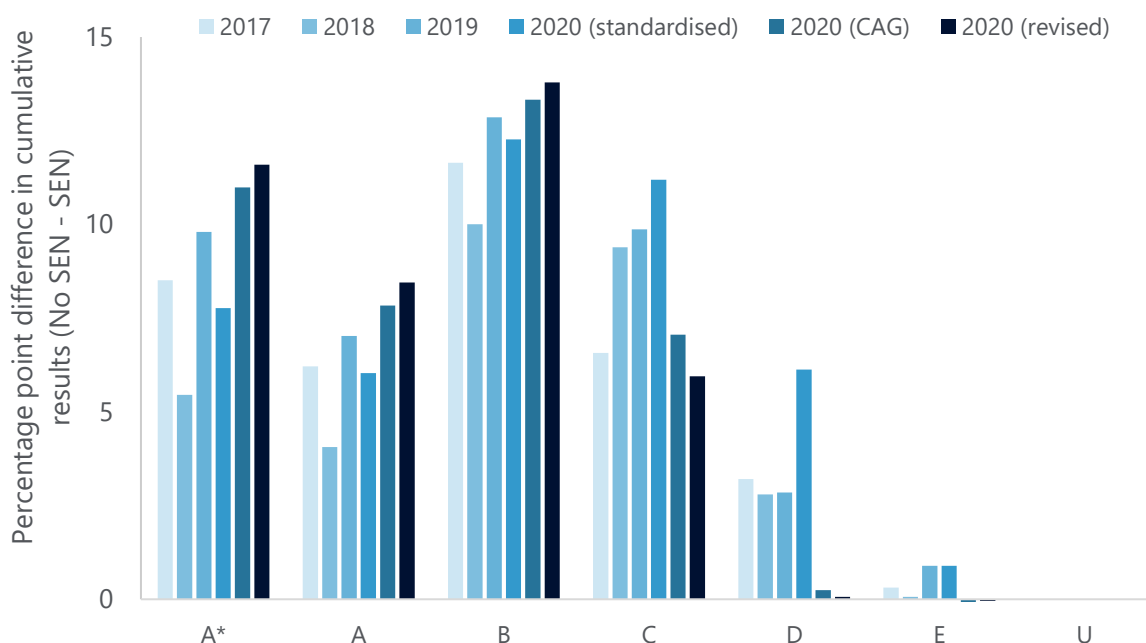
Source: 2017 to 2019: WEDPLASC; 2020: awarding bodies

(1) Includes data only for those centres present in both the 2020 WJEC data and previous WEDPLASC data

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Table 5.5: A level cumulative percentage results by SEN provision and percentage point attainment gaps, 18-year-olds

Year	SEN provision	Grades	A*	A	B	C	D	E	U
2017	On SEN register	1,090	14.7	10.2	37.3	67.8	87.3	97.3	100.0
2017	No SEN	19,495	23.2	16.4	49.0	74.4	90.5	97.6	100.0
2017	Gap (NoSEN-SEN)		8.5	6.2	11.6	6.6	3.2	0.3	0.0
2018	On SEN register	1,100	19.5	13.2	40.9	66.2	87.8	97.4	100.0
2018	No SEN	18,600	24.9	17.3	50.9	75.5	90.6	97.4	100.0
2018	Gap (NoSEN-SEN)		5.5	4.1	10.0	9.4	2.8	0.1	0.0
2019	On SEN register	1,155	16.1	10.4	39.0	65.9	88.1	96.7	100.0
2019	No SEN	18,075	25.9	17.4	51.8	75.8	90.9	97.6	100.0
2019	Gap (NoSEN-SEN)		9.8	7.0	12.9	9.9	2.8	0.9	0.0
2020 (standardised)	On SEN register	1,070	18.4	11.5	41.0	66.9	86.6	97.5	100.0
2020 (standardised)	No SEN	17,580	26.2	17.6	53.3	78.0	92.7	98.4	100.0
2020 (standardised)	Gap (NoSEN-SEN)		7.8	6.0	12.3	11.2	6.1	0.9	0.0
2020 (CAG)	On SEN register	1,070	28.3	17.9	55.0	83.6	97.8	100.0	100.0
2020 (CAG)	No SEN	17,555	39.3	25.7	68.3	90.7	98.1	99.9	100.0
2020 (CAG)	Gap (NoSEN-SEN)		11.0	7.8	13.3	7.1	0.2	-0.1	0.0
2020 (revised)[1]	On SEN register	1,070	30.3	18.7	57.5	86.6	98.8	100.0	100.0
2020 (revised)[1]	No SEN	17,610	41.9	27.2	71.3	92.6	98.8	100.0	100.0
2020 (revised)[1]	Gap (NoSEN-SEN)		11.6	8.5	13.8	5.9	0.1	0.0	0.0

Source: 2015 to 2019: WEDPLASC; 2020: awarding bodies

NB the attainment gap has been calculated from unrounded figures and therefore may not be exactly equal to the difference between the rounded figures.

(1)   Revised are the higher of the centre assessment grade, standardised grade or AS grade based on data received from awarding bodies. Final published results may differ from revised estimates.

6. AS

National results

Table 6.1 shows that revised AS results are substantially higher than the standardised grades, and also higher than in results between 2015 and 2019. Most of the increase in revised results is due to the centre assessment grades.

Around 30% of learners will be awarded grade A in the revised 2020 results, whereas the figure in the original published results was 22.2%. In 2019, the figure was 20.3%.
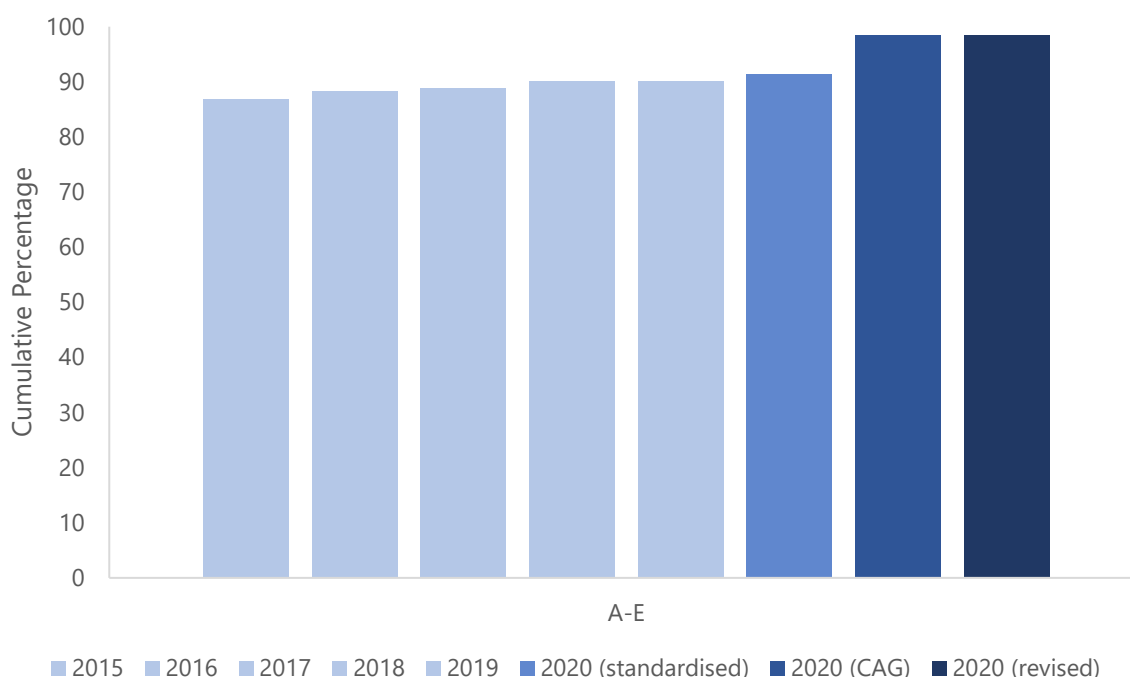
More than 98% of learners will be awarded A-E in the revised results, compared to 91.4% of learners in the original published results. In 2019, the figure was 90%.

Figure 6.1: National AS summer A results 2015-2020
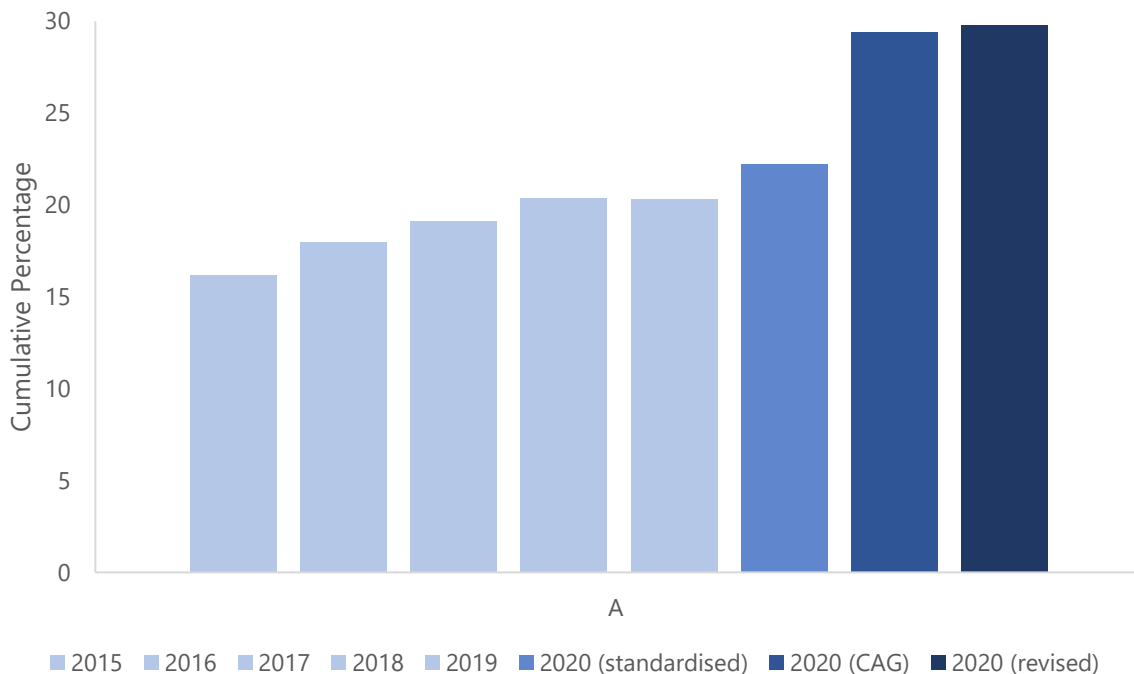
Source: 2015 to 2019 amd 2020 (standardised): JCQ; 2020 (CAG) and 2020 (revised): awarding bodies

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Figure 6.2: National AS summer cumulative E results 2015-2020

Source: 2015 to 2019 and 2020 (standardised): JCQ; 2020 (CAG) and 2020 (revised): awarding bodies

Table 6.1: AS Results 2015-2020 (cumulative percentage)

	A	A-E	Number of grades
2020 (revised) [2]	29.8	98.5	45,475[1]
2020 (CAG) [2]	29.4	98.4	43,940[3]
2020 (standardised) [2]	22.2	91.4	44,435
2019	20.3	90.0	39,645
2018	20.4	90.0	42,915
2017	19.1	88.9	46,125
2016	18.0	88.3	49,145
2015	16.2	86.8	52,770

Source: 2015 to 2020 (published): JCQ; 2020 (CAG) and 2020 (revised): awarding bodies

(1) This figure may differ to previously published figures due to differing timing of data extracts.

(2) Published are the calculated results released on 13 August. CAG are the centre assessed grades. Revised are the higher of either the centre assessment grades, or calculated grade based on data received from awarding bodies. Final published results may differ from revised estimates.

(3) The number of centre assessment grades is lower than the final number of grades due to instances where the CAG had not been finalised at point the data was submitted, or where a CAG was not submitted but a grade could still be awarded based on prior unit attainment.
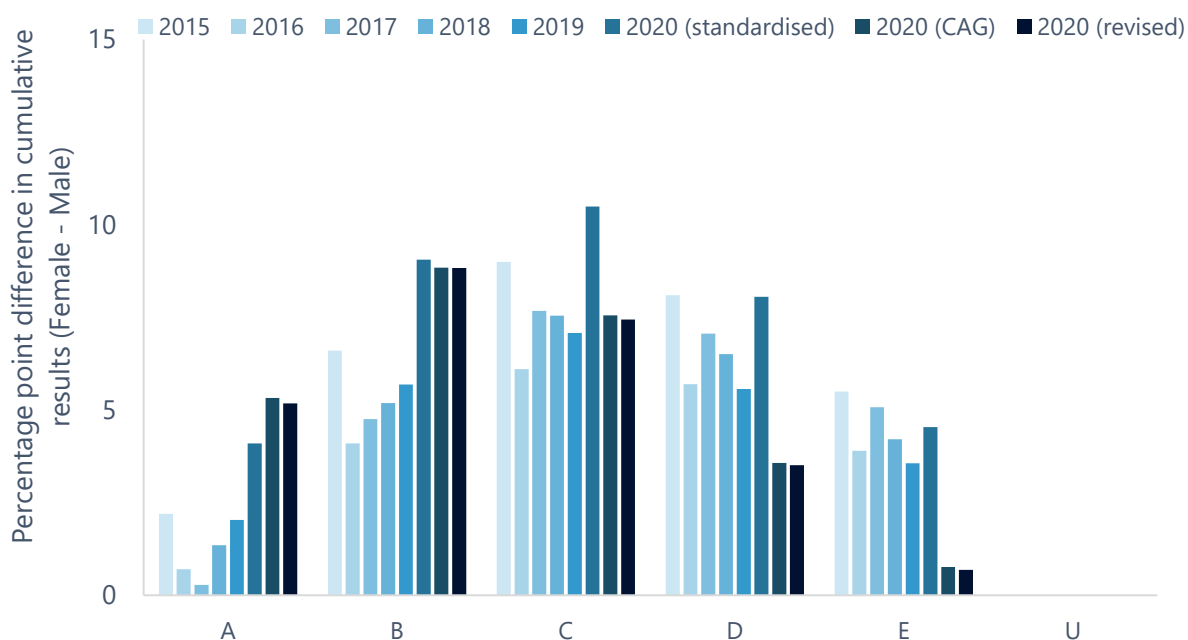
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Attainment gap by gender

Attainment gaps by gender at cumulative grade A are wider in the revised AS results compared to standardised AS grades. They are also wider than the gaps evident in results between 2015 and 2019.

The gap is narrower at cumulative A – E. Attainment gaps at other grade thresholds are more similar.

Due to the overall increase in national results, both boys and girls have higher revised results in 2020 than in 2019. However, results for girls have increased by more than results for boys at grade A.

Figure 6.3: AS attainment gap in cumulative results by gender

Source: 2015 to 2019 and 2020 (standardised): JCQ; 2020 (CAG) and 2020 (revised): awarding bodies

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Table 6.2: AS cumulative percentage results by gender and percentage point attainment gaps

Year	Gender	Grades	A	B	C	D	E	U
2015	Girls	29,120	17.2	38.5	61.5	78.6	89.3	100.0
2015	Boys	23,650	15.0	31.9	52.5	70.5	83.8	100.0
2015	Gap (Girls - Boys)		2.2	6.6	9.0	8.1	5.5	0.0
2016	Girls	27,035	18.3	38.9	61.6	79.0	90.0	100.0
2016	Boys	22,105	17.6	34.8	55.5	73.3	86.1	100.0
2016	Gap (Girls - Boys)		0.7	4.1	6.1	5.7	3.9	0.0
2017	Girls	25,585	19.3	40.6	63.5	80.6	91.1	100.0
2017	Boys	20,540	19.0	35.8	55.8	73.5	86.0	100.0
2017	Gap (Girls - Boys)		0.3	4.8	7.7	7.1	5.1	0.0
2018	Girls	24,045	21.0	42.4	65.2	82.0	91.9	100.0
2018	Boys	18,870	19.6	37.2	57.7	75.5	87.7	100.0
2018	Gap (Girls - Boys)		1.3	5.2	7.5	6.5	4.2	0.0
2019	Girls	22,295	21.2	42.9	65.1	81.5	91.6	100.0
2019	Boys	17,355	19.1	37.2	58.0	75.9	88.0	100.0
2019	Gap (Girls - Boys)		2.0	5.7	7.1	5.6	3.6	0.0
2020 (standardised)	Girls	25,675	23.8	47.1	70.2	85.2	93.4	100.0
2020 (standardised)	Boys	19,760	20.0	38.3	59.8	77.2	88.9	100.0
2020 (standardised)	Gap (Girls - Boys)		3.8	8.9	10.4	8.0	4.5	0.0
2020 (CAG)	Girls	24,810	31.8	59.9	84.1	94.5	98.7	100.0
2020 (CAG)	Boys	19,125	26.4	51.0	76.6	90.9	97.9	100.0
2020 (CAG)	Gap (Girls - Boys)		5.3	8.8	7.6	3.6	0.8	0.0
2020 (revised)	Girls	25,695	32.1	59.9	83.8	94.5	98.8	100.0
2020 (revised)	Boys	19,780	26.9	51.0	76.3	91.0	98.1	100.0
2020 (revised)	Gap (Girls - Boys)		5.2	8.8	7.4	3.5	0.7	0.0

Source: 2015 to 2019 and 2020 (standardised): JCQ; 2020 (CAG) and 2020 (revised): awarding bodies

NB the attainment gap has been calculated from unrounded figures and therefore may not be exactly equal to the difference between the rounded figures.
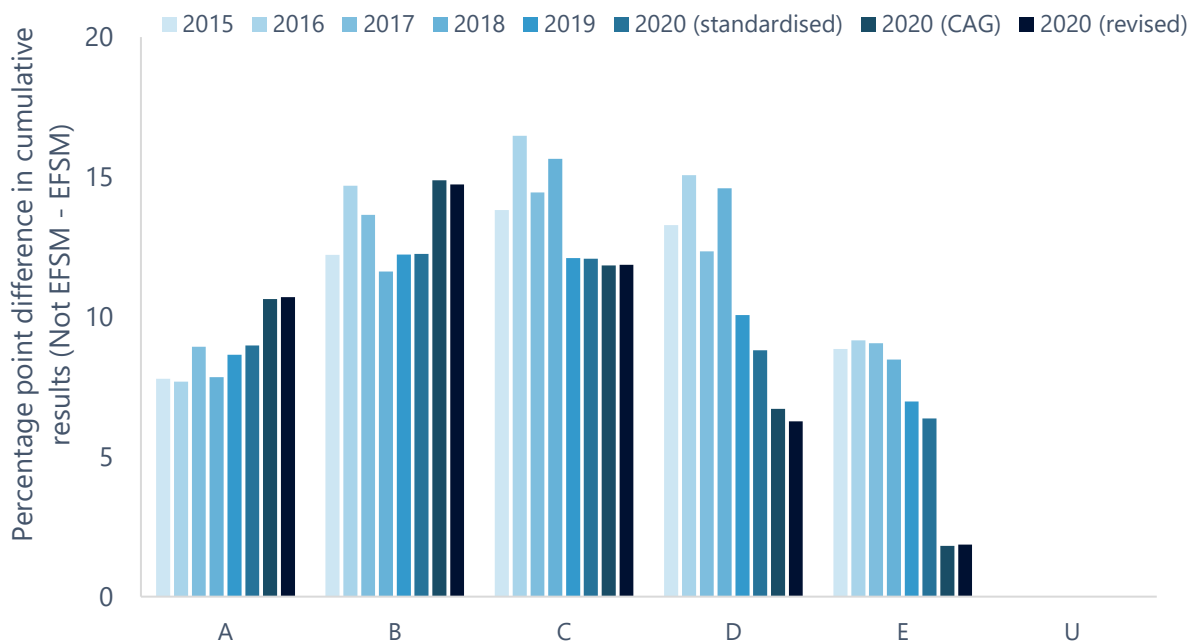
Attainment gap by eligibility for free school meals (17-year-olds)

For 17-year-olds, the main entry cohort for AS, attainment gaps by free school meal eligibility at cumulative grade A are wider in the revised results compared to the standardised AS grades and those seen in AS results between 2015 and 2019.

The gap is narrower at cumulative A – E.

Due to the overall increase in national results, both those eligible for free school meals and those not eligible have higher revised results in 2020 than in either the standardised grades for 2020 or results in 2019. However, the increases in A grades are larger in the revised results for those who are not eligible for free school meals.

Figure 6.4 AS attainment gap in cumulative results by eligibility for free school meals, 17-year-olds[1]

Source: 2015 to 2019: WEDPLASC; 2020: awarding bodies
(1) Includes data only for those centres present in both the 2020 WJEC data and previous WEDPLASC data

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Table 6.3: AS cumulative percentage results by eligibility for free school meals and percentage point attainment gaps, 17-year-olds [1]

Year	FSM	Grades	A	B	C	D	E	U
2015	Eligible	1,385	8.1	23.0	43.0	60.8	77.2	100.0
2015	Non-eligible	26,995	15.9	35.2	56.8	74.1	86.0	100.0
2015	Gap (NotEFSM - EFSM)		7.8	12.2	13.8	13.3	8.8	0.0
2016	Eligible	1,385	9.7	21.3	40.9	59.7	77.9	100.0
2016	Non-eligible	23,505	17.4	36.0	57.3	74.8	87.0	100.0
2016	Gap (NotEFSM - EFSM)		7.7	14.7	16.5	15.1	9.2	0.0
2017	Eligible	1,425	9.5	23.6	43.8	63.1	78.5	100.0
2017	Non-eligible	21,990	18.4	37.2	58.3	75.5	87.6	100.0
2017	Gap (NotEFSM - EFSM)		8.9	13.6	14.4	12.3	9.1	0.0
2018	Eligible	1,395	11.3	26.8	44.3	62.4	80.3	100.0
2018	Non-eligible	21,210	19.1	38.4	59.9	77.0	88.8	100.0
2018	Gap (NotEFSM - EFSM)		7.8	11.6	15.6	14.6	8.5	0.0
2019	Eligible	1,090	10.7	26.4	47.2	66.1	81.3	100.0
2019	Non-eligible	19,535	19.4	38.6	59.3	76.2	88.3	100.0
2019	Gap (NotEFSM - EFSM)		8.6	12.2	12.1	10.1	7.0	0.0
2020 (standardised)	Eligible	1,395	13.4	32.3	54.8	73.0	84.8	100.0
2020 (standardised)	Non-eligible	24,990	22.4	44.5	66.9	81.8	91.2	100.0
2020 (standardised)	Gap (NotEFSM - EFSM)		9.0	12.3	12.1	8.8	6.4	0.0
2020 (CAG)	Eligible	1,395	19.3	42.4	70.5	87.1	97.2	100.0
2020 (CAG)	Non-eligible	25,010	29.9	57.3	82.3	93.8	99.0	100.0
2020 (CAG)	Gap (NotEFSM – EFSM)		10.6	14.9	11.8	6.7	1.8	0.0
2020 (revised)	Eligible	1,395	20.1	43.3	70.9	87.9	97.3	100.0
2020 (revised)	Non-eligible	25,015	30.9	58.0	82.8	94.2	99.1	100.0
2020 (revised)	Gap (NotEFSM - EFSM)		10.7	14.7	11.9	6.3	1.9	0.0

Source: 2015 to 2019: WEDPLASC; 2020: awarding bodies

(1)   This figure may differ to previously published figures due to differing timing of data extracts.

NB the attainment gap has been calculated from unrounded figures and therefore may not be exactly equal to the difference between the rounded figures.

Attainment gap by age

Figure 6.5 presents cumulative attainment gaps by age over time.

Similar to the changing pattern of results by age at A level, at cumulative grades A, B and C, attainment gaps in 2020 (both published and revised) have shifted to show 17-year-olds achieving higher results than non-17-year-olds. In previous years the reverse was the case, with results for non-17-year-olds higher than those for 17-year-olds.

It is important to note that many non-17-year-olds entered for AS are 18-year-olds that were resitting AS units to improve their A level grade this summer. These candidates therefore should have received an A level grade as well as an AS grade.

Figure 6.5: AS attainment gap in cumulative results by age [1]
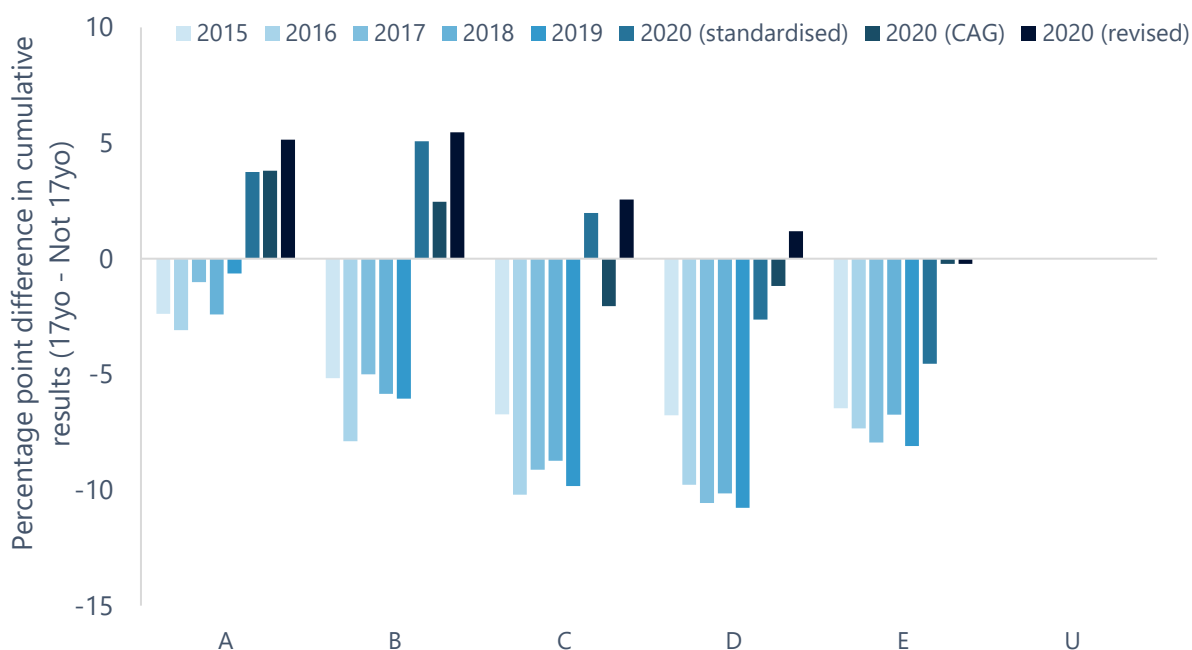
Source: 2015 to 2019: WEDPLASC; 2020: awarding bodies

(1) Includes data only for those centres present in both the 2020 awarding body data and previous WEDPLASC data

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Table 6.4: AS cumulative percentage results by age and percentage point attainment gaps[1]

Year	Age	Grades	A	B	C	D	E	U
2015	17yo	29,465	16.4	35.5	56.9	74.0	85.9	100.0
2015	Non17yo	7,635	18.8	40.7	63.7	80.8	92.4	100.0
2015	Gap (17yo - Non17yo)		-2.4	-5.2	-6.7	-6.8	-6.5	0.0
2016	17yo	25,475	17.7	35.9	57.0	74.3	86.7	100.0
2016	Non17yo	7,450	20.8	43.8	67.2	84.1	94.0	100.0
2016	Gap (17yo - Non17yo)		-3.1	-7.9	-10.2	-9.8	-7.3	0.0
2017	17yo	23,415	17.9	36.4	57.4	74.7	87.0	100.0
2017	Non17yo	6,270	18.9	41.4	66.5	85.3	95.0	100.0
2017	Gap (17yo - Non17yo)		-1.0	-5.0	-9.1	-10.6	-7.9	0.0
2018	17yo	22,605	18.6	37.7	58.9	76.1	88.3	100.0
2018	Non17yo	5,490	21.0	43.5	67.7	86.3	95.0	100.0
2018	Gap (17yo - Non17yo)		-2.4	-5.8	-8.7	-10.1	-6.7	0.0
2019	17yo	20,625	18.9	38.0	58.6	75.7	87.9	100.0
2019	Non17yo	5,130	19.6	44.1	68.4	86.4	96.0	100.0
2019	Gap (17yo - Non17yo)		-0.6	-6.1	-9.8	-10.8	-8.1	0.0
2020 (standardised)	17yo	27,225	22.7	44.6	66.8	81.7	91.0	100.0
2020 (standardised)	Non17yo	5,895	18.9	39.6	64.8	84.3	95.6	100.0
2020 (standardised)	Gap (17yo - Non17yo)		3.8	5.1	2.0	-2.6	-4.5	0.0
2020 (CAG)	17yo	27,250	30.1	57.2	82.0	93.6	99.0	100.0
2020 (CAG)	Non17yo	4,725	26.3	54.7	84.0	94.8	99.2	100.0
2020 (CAG)	Gap (17yo – Non17yo)		3.8	2.5	-2.0	-1.2	-0.2	0.0
2020 (revised)	17yo	27,255	31.0	57.9	82.4	93.9	99.1	100.0
2020 (revised)	Non17yo	5,905	25.9	52.4	79.9	92.8	99.3	100.0
2020 (revised)	Gap (17yo - Non17yo)		5.2	5.5	2.6	1.2	-0.2	0.0

Source: 2015 to 2019: WEDPLASC; 2020: awarding bodies

(1) This figure may differ to previously published figures due to differing timing of data extracts.

NB the attainment gap has been calculated from unrounded figures and therefore may not be exactly equal to the difference between the rounded figures.

Attainment gap by special educational needs (SEN) provision (17-year-olds)

For 17-year-olds, the main entry cohort for AS, attainment gaps by SEN provision at cumulative grade A are wider in the revised results compared to the standardised AS grades and AS results between 2015 and 2019.

The gap is narrower at cumulative A – E.

Due to the overall increase in national results, both those with SEN provision and those without have higher revised results in 2020 than in either the original published grades for 2020 or 2019. However, the increases in A grades are larger in the revised results for those who have no SEN provision.

It is important to note that the SEN provision data is not available for all learners and where it is available it may not be data from the current year. SEN provision data is only available from 2017 onwards.

Figure 6.6: AS attainment gap in cumulative results by SEN provision, 17-year-olds[1]
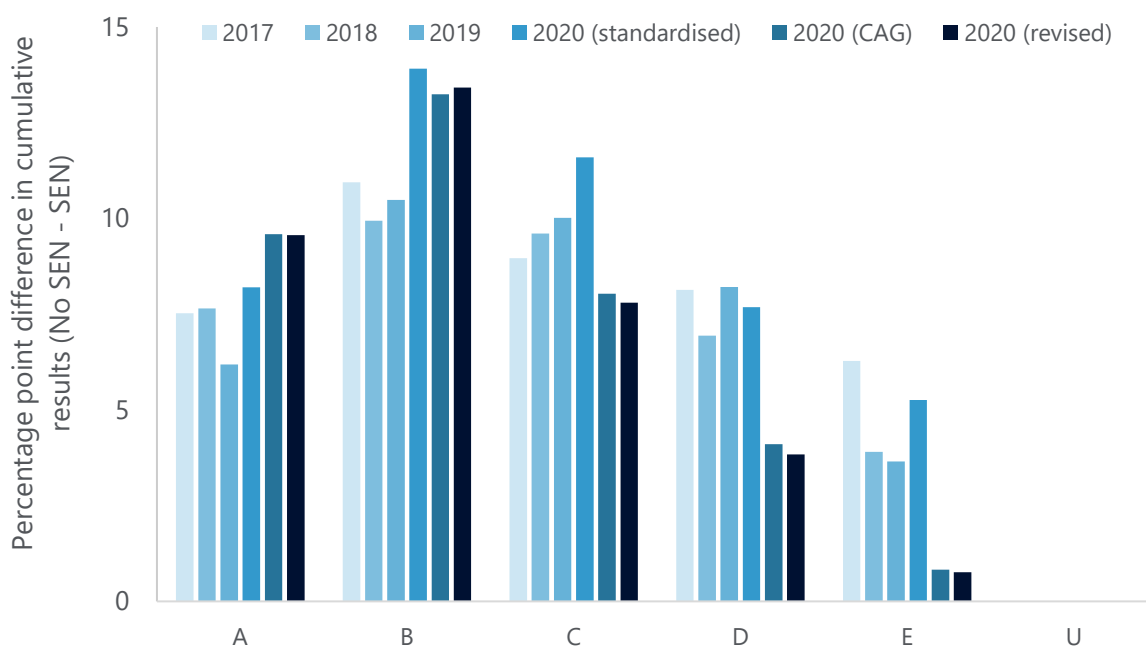
Source: 2017 to 2019: WEDPLASC; 2020: awarding bodies
(1) Includes data only for those centres present in both the 2020 WJEC data and previous WEDPLASC data

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Table 6.5: AS cumulative percentage results by SEN provision and percentage point attainment gaps, 17-year-olds[1]

Year	SEN provision	Grades	A	B	C	D	E	U
2017	On SEN register	1,410	10.8	26.1	48.9	67.0	81.1	100.0
2017	No SEN	21,910	18.3	37.1	57.9	75.2	87.4	100.0
2017	Gap (NoSEN-SEN)		7.5	10.9	9.0	8.1	6.3	0.0
2018	On SEN register	1,490	11.5	28.4	50.0	69.6	84.6	100.0
2018	No SEN	21,115	19.1	38.3	59.6	76.6	88.5	100.0
2018	Gap (NoSEN-SEN)		7.7	9.9	9.6	6.9	3.9	0.0
2019	On SEN register	1,355	13.1	28.2	49.3	68.0	84.5	100.0
2019	No SEN	19,270	19.3	38.7	59.3	76.2	88.1	100.0
2019	Gap (NoSEN-SEN)		6.2	10.5	10.0	8.2	3.7	0.0
2020 (standardised)	On SEN register	1,790	14.2	30.9	55.4	74.2	85.9	100.0
2020 (standardised)	No SEN	24,540	22.4	44.8	67.0	81.9	91.2	100.0
2020 (standardised)	Gap (NoSEN-SEN)		8.2	13.9	11.6	7.7	5.3	0.0
2020 (CAG)	On SEN register	1,795	20.4	44.2	74.2	89.6	98.2	100.0
2020 (CAG)	No SEN	24,560	30.0	57.4	82.2	93.7	99.0	100.0
2020 (CAG)	Gap (NoSEN-SEN)		9.6	13.2	8.0	4.1	0.8	0.0
2020 (revised)	On SEN register	1,795	21.4	44.7	74.8	90.2	98.3	100.0
2020 (revised)	No SEN	24,565	30.9	58.1	82.6	94.1	99.1	100.0
2020 (revised)	Gap (NoSEN-SEN)		9.6	13.4	7.8	3.8	0.8	0.0

Source: 2017 to 2019: WEDPLASC; 2020: awarding bodies

(1) This figure may differ to previously published figures due to differing timing of data extracts.

NB the attainment gap has been calculated from unrounded figures and therefore may not be exactly equal to the difference between the rounded figures.

7. GCSE

To match the methodology in the main JCQ tables as closely as possible, the figures in this section relate to grades awarded in the summer exam series only, i.e. outcomes exclude grades achieved in the November exam series.

National results

The figures used in this subsection use data for all full course single award GCSEs[3], plus double award science[4]. Double award science grades are counted as two separate grades. Cumulative results are presented at A/7, C/4, G/1 as these figures include both A*-G and 9-1 GCSEs[5]. This is done to match the methodology of the JCQ main results tables as closely as possible.

Revised GCSE results are substantially higher than results between 2015 and 2019 and the 2020 standardised results.

More than a quarter of grades were awarded at A/7 or better in the revised 2020 results, whereas the figure in 2019 (Table 7.2) was 18.4%.

Just under three-quarters of grades were awarded at C/4 or better in the revised results, compared to 62.8% of grades in 2019.

Table 7.1: GCSE Results summer 2020 (cumulative percentage) (all ages)[(1)(2)]

	A/7	C/4	G/1
2020 (revised)	25.9	74.5	99.6
2020 (CAG)	24.6	73.7	99.5
2020 (standardised)	20.6	66.5	97.9

Source: awarding bodies
  (1) The data includes results for GCSEs graded A*-G designed for Wales as well as GCSEs graded 9-1 designed for England.
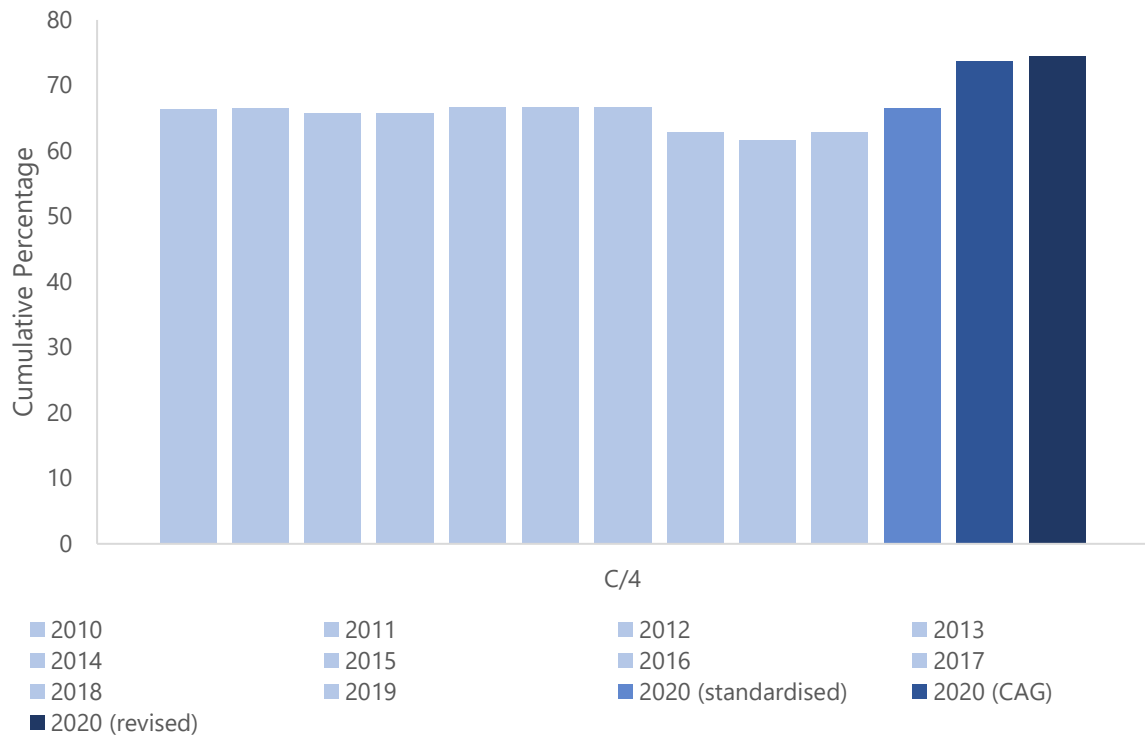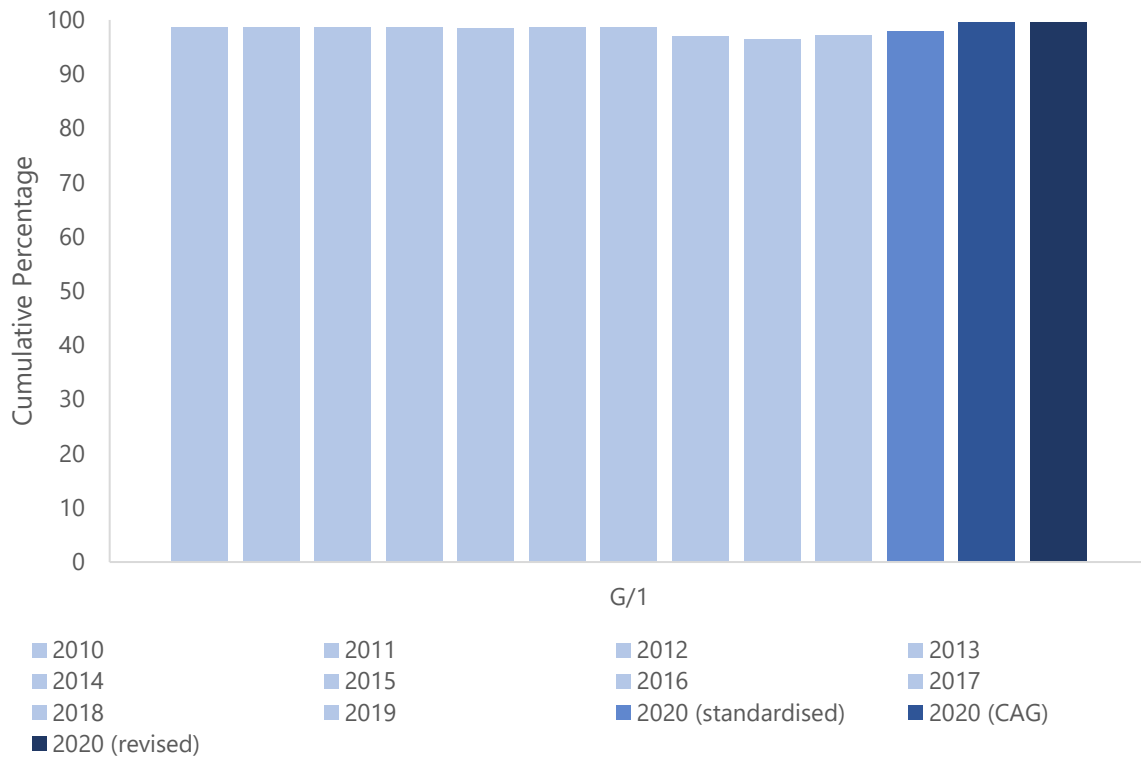 (2) Includes full course and double award science (which is double counted) GCSE, but excluding short courses

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[3] Short course GCSEs are reported separately to full course GCSEs by JCQ.
[4] Both double science grades are counted, to reflect the size of the double award qualification.
[5] A*-G GCSEs are designed and approved against criteria specific to Wales. These qualifications are only offered by WJEC. GCSEs that are graded on a 9-1 scale are designed against criteria specified elsewhere. These are taken in Wales in subjects in which there is no A*-G GCSE or in independent schools.

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Table 7.2: GCSE Results summer 2015-2019 (cumulative percentage) (all ages)[1][2]

	A/7	C/4	G/1
2019	18.4	62.8	97.2
2018	18.5	61.6	96.4
2017	17.9	62.8	96.9
2016	19.4	66.6	98.7
2015	19.2	66.6	98.7

Source: JCQ

(1) The data includes results for GCSEs graded A*-G designed for Wales as well as GCSEs graded 9-1 designed for England.
(2) Includes full course and double award science (which is double counted) GCSE, but excluding short courses

Figure 7.1: National GCSE summer cumulative A/7 results 2010-2020[1][2]

Source: 2010-2019 JCQ, 2020 awarding bodies

(1) The data includes results for GCSEs graded A*-G designed for Wales as well as GCSEs graded 9-1 designed for England.
(2) Includes full course and double award science (which is double counted) GCSE, but excluding short courses

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Figure 7.2: National GCSE summer cumulative C/4 results 2010-2020[1)(2)]

Source: 2010-2019 JCQ, 2020 awarding bodies

(1) The data includes results for GCSEs graded A*-G designed for Wales as well as GCSEs graded 9-1 designed for England.
(2) Includes full course and double award science (which is double counted) GCSE, but excluding short courses

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Figure 7.3: National GCSE summer cumulative G/1 results 2010-2020[1][2]

Source: 2010-2019 JCQ, 2020 awarding bodies

(1) The data includes results for GCSEs graded A*-G designed for Wales as well as GCSEs graded 9-1 designed for England.
(2) Includes full course and double award science (which is double counted) GCSE, but excluding short courses

The figures used in the following subsections on GCSE attainment gaps use data for all full course single award GCSEs, plus double award science. Double award science grades are counted as two separate grades. Short courses are excluded. This analysis includes both A*-G and 9-1 GCSEs and reports at selected matched grade thresholds, which is why cumulative results are presented at grades A/7, C/4, G/1. This is done to match the methodology of the JCQ main results tables as closely as possible.

Attainment gap by gender

Figure 7.4 presents cumulative attainment gaps by gender over time. The 2020 revised results, centre assessment grades and standardised grades are compared to results from 2015 through to 2019.

The gender gap has widened in favour of girls at grade A/7 in the revised 2020 results compared to results between 2015 and 2019 and the standardised grades.

The gender attainment gap at G/1 is narrower than in recent years as nearly all learners of both genders are achieving at least G/1. The gap at C/4 is comparable to recent years.

Figure 7.4: GCSE attainment gap in cumulative results by gender at key grades[1][2]
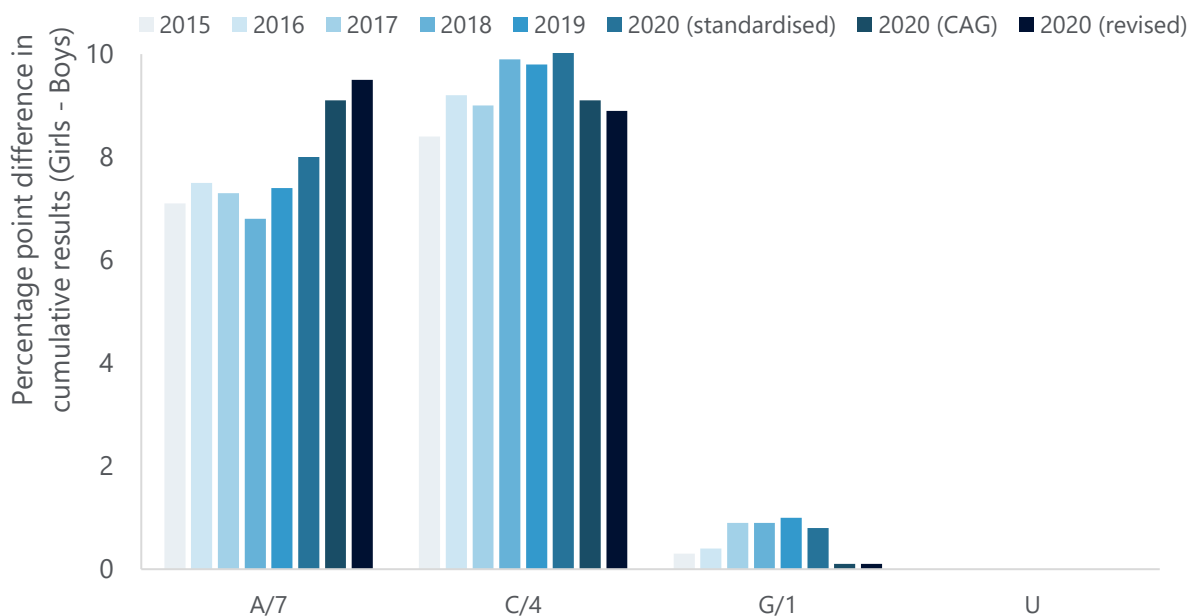
Source: 2015-2019 JCQ, 2020 awarding bodies

(1) The data includes results for GCSEs graded A*-G designed for Wales as well as GCSEs graded 9-1 designed for England.
(2) Includes full course and double award science (which is double counted) GCSE, but excluding short courses

Table 7.3: GCSE summer cumulative percentage results by gender at key grades and percentage point attainment gaps[1][2]

Year	Girls				Boys				Gap (Girls – Boys)			
	A/7	C/4	G/1	U	A/7	C/4	G/1	U	A/7	C/4	G/1	U
2010	22.0	70.0	98.9	100.0	16.2	62.6	98.6	100.0	5.8	7.4	0.3	0.0
2011	22.5	70.3	98.9	100.0	16.3	62.5	98.6	100.0	6.2	7.8	0.3	0.0
2012	22.1	69.8	99.0	100.0	16.3	61.8	98.6	100.0	5.8	8.0	0.4	0.0
2013	22.8	70.1	98.9	100.0	15.4	61.1	98.5	100.0	7.4	9.0	0.4	0.0
2014	23.1	71.0	98.8	100.0	15.5	61.9	98.3	100.0	7.6	9.1	0.5	0.0
2015	22.6	70.7	98.8	100.0	15.5	62.3	98.5	100.0	7.1	8.4	0.3	0.0
2016	23.0	71.0	98.9	100.0	15.5	61.8	98.5	100.0	7.5	9.2	0.4	0.0
2017	21.5	67.3	97.3	100.0	14.2	58.3	96.4	100.0	7.3	9.0	0.9	0.0
2018	21.9	66.5	96.8	100.0	15.1	56.6	95.9	100.0	6.8	9.9	0.9	0.0
2019	22.0	67.6	97.7	100.0	14.6	57.8	96.7	100.0	7.4	9.8	1.0	0.0
2020 (standardised)	24.6	71.5	98.3	100.0	16.6	61.4	97.5	100.0	8.0	10.1	0.8	0.0
2020 (CAG)	29.1	78.1	99.6	100.0	20.0	69.1	99.4	100.0	9.1	9.1	0.1	0.0
2020 (revised)	30.6	78.9	99.6	100.0	21.1	70.0	99.5	100.0	9.5	8.9	0.1	0.0

Source: 2010-2019 JCQ, 2020 awarding bodies

(1) The data includes results for GCSEs graded A*-G designed for Wales as well as GCSEs graded 9-1 designed for England.
(2) Includes full course and double award science (which is double counted) GCSE, but excluding short courses

Attainment gap by eligibility for free school meals (16-year-olds)

As 2020 data for free school meal eligibility is only available for WJEC learners, the analysis for 2020 in this section relates only to WJEC qualifications. To ensure a valid comparison, the analysis only includes data for centres which are present in both the 2020 WJEC data and the 2016/17-2018/19 WEDPLASC data.

The attainment gap by free school meal eligibility at cumulative grade A/7 are wider in the revised GCSE results compared to attainment gaps in results in recent years and the standardised grades. The gap is narrower at cumulative C/4 and G/1.

Due to the overall increase in national results, those eligible for free school meals and those not eligible have higher revised results in 2020 than in 2019. However, increases in A/7 grades are larger in the revised results for those who are not eligible for free school meals, which increases the attainment gap at that grade threshold.

Figure 7.5: GCSE attainment gap in cumulative results by eligibility for free school meals at key grades, 16-year-olds[1][2][3]
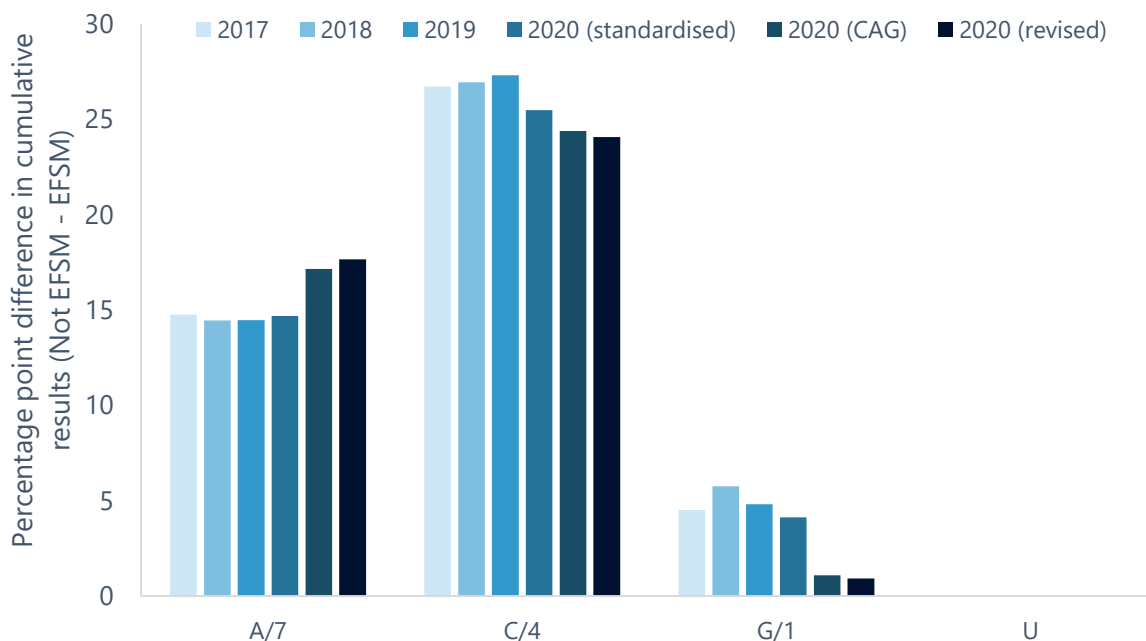
Source: 2017-2019 WEDPLASC, 2020 awarding bodies
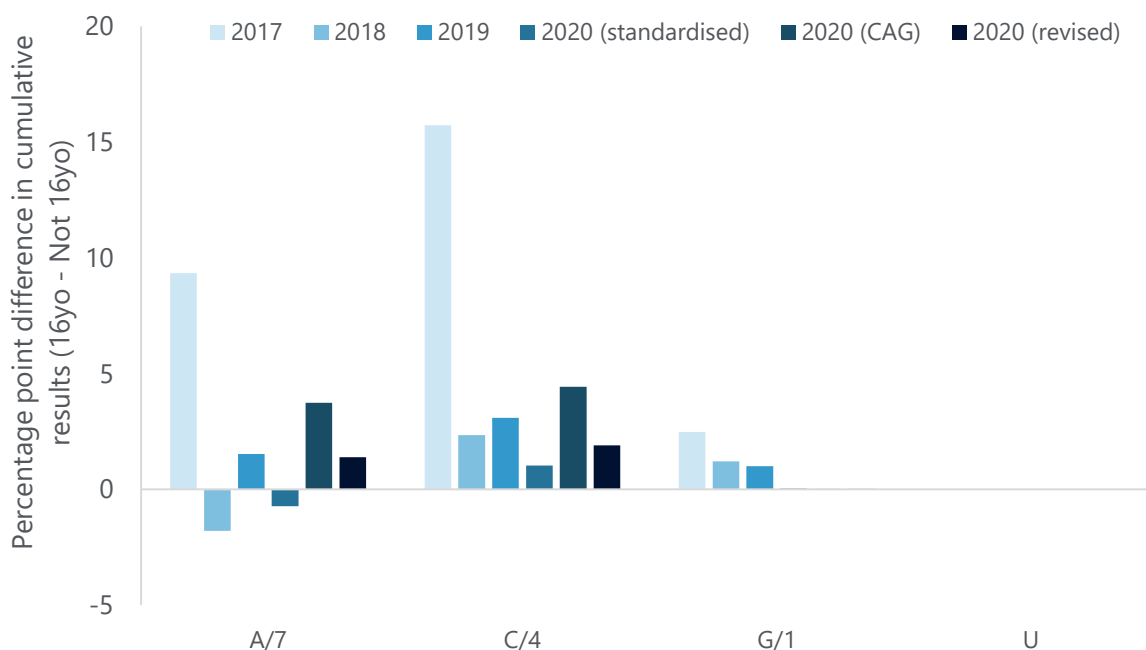
(1) The data includes results for GCSEs graded A*-G designed for Wales as well as GCSEs graded 9-1 designed for England.
(2) Includes full course and double award science (which is double counted) GCSE, but excluding short courses.
(3) Includes data only for those centres present in the 2020 WJEC data and previous WEDPLASC data.

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Table 7.4: GCSE cumulative percentage results by eligibility for free school meals and percentage point attainment gaps, 16-year-olds [1][2][3]

Year	EFSM	Grades	A/7	C/4	G/1	U
2017	EFSM	31,895	7.2	44.1	93.5	100.00
2017	NotEFSM	194,345	22.0	70.8	98.1	100.00
2017	Gap (NotEFSM-EFSM)		14.8	26.7	4.5	0.00
2018	EFSM	35,530	6.9	41.5	91.8	100.00
2018	NotEFSM	198,715	21.3	68.5	97.5	100.00
2018	Gap (NotEFSM-EFSM)		14.4	26.9	5.7	0.00
2019	EFSM	32,995	6.6	41.6	93.3	100.00
2019	NotEFSM	220,535	21.1	68.9	98.1	100.00
2019	Gap (NotEFSM-EFSM)		14.5	27.3	4.8	0.00
2020 (standardised)	EFSM	35,610	8.0	45.8	94.6	100.00
2020 (standardised)	NotEFSM	224,205	22.7	71.2	98.7	100.00
2020 (standardised)	Gap (NotEFSM-EFSM)		14.7	25.5	4.1	0.00
2020 (CAG)	EFSM	35,610	10.3	53.9	98.7	100.00
2020 (CAG)	NotEFSM	224,205	27.5	78.3	99.7	100.00
2020 (CAG)	Gap (NotEFSM-EFSM)		17.2	24.4	1.1	0.00
2020 (revised)R	EFSM	35,610	11.0	54.9	98.9	100.00
2020 (revised)R	NotEFSM	224,205	28.7	79.0	99.8	100.00
2020 (revised)R	Gap (NotEFSM-EFSM)		17.7	24.1	0.9	0.00

Source: 2017-2019 WEDPLASC, 2020 WJEC

(1) The data includes results for GCSEs graded A*-G designed for Wales as well as GCSEs graded 9-1 designed for England.

(2) Includes full course and double award science (which is double counted) GCSE, but excluding short courses

(3) Includes data only for those centres present in the 2020 WJEC data and previous WEDPLASC data

Attainment gap by age

Figure 7.6 presents cumulative attainment gaps by age over time. Standardised, CAG and revised 2020 results are compared to results in 2017, 2018 and 2019.

The attainment gap between 16yo and non-16yo is similar in revised results in 2020 compared to 2019 at grade A/7 and grade C/4 but has narrowed at grade G/1.

Figure 7.6: GCSE attainment gap in cumulative results by age at key grades[(1)(2)]

Source: 2017-2019 WEDPLASC, 2020 awarding bodies

(1) The data includes results for GCSEs graded A*-G designed for Wales as well as GCSEs graded 9-1 designed for England.
(2) Includes full course and double award science (which is double counted) GCSE, but excluding short courses
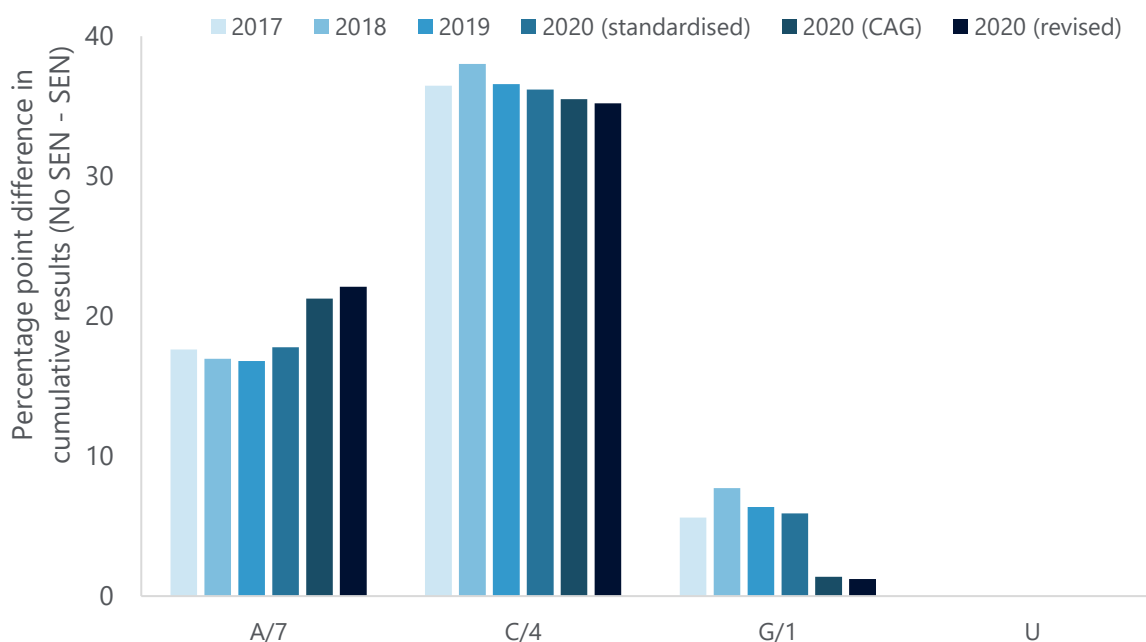(3) Includes data only for those centres present in the 2020 awarding body data and previous WEDPLASC data

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Table 7.5: GCSE summer cumulative percentage results by age and percentage point attainment gaps at key grades[1][2][3]

Year	Age	Grades	A/7	C/4	G/1	U
2017	16yo	226,320	19.9	67.1	97.4	100.0
2017	Not16yo	50,515	10.5	51.3	94.9	100.0
2017	Gap (16yo-Not16yo)		9.3	15.7	2.5	0.0
2018	16yo	234,310	19.1	64.4	96.6	100.0
2018	Not16yo	14,720	20.9	62.0	95.4	100.0
2018	Gap (16yo-Not16yo)		-1.8	2.3	1.2	0.0
2019	16yo	254,080	19.2	65.2	97.4	100.0
2019	Not16yo	17,310	17.6	62.1	96.4	100.0
2019	Gap (16yo-Not16yo)		1.5	3.1	1.0	0.0
2020 (standardised)	16yo	261,765	20.6	67.5	98.0	100.0
2020 (standardised)	Not16yo	19,365	21.3	66.5	98.0	100.0
2020 (standardised)	Gap (16yo-Not16yo)		-0.7	1.0	0.0	0.0
2020 (CAG)	16yo	261,765	25.1	74.8	99.6	100.0
2020 (CAG)	Not16yo	19,365	21.3	70.3	99.5	100.0
2020 (CAG)	Gap (16yo-Not16yo)		3.7	4.4	0.0	0.0
2020 (revised)	16yo	261,765	26.2	75.5	99.6	100.0
2020 (revised)	Not16yo	19,365	24.8	73.6	99.6	100.0
2020 (revised)	Gap (16yo-Not16yo)		1.4	1.9	0.0	0.0

Source: 2017-2019 WEDPLASC, 2020 awarding bodies

(1) The data includes results for GCSEs graded A*-G designed for Wales as well as GCSEs graded 9-1 designed for England.
(2) Includes full course and double award science (which is double counted) GCSE, but excluding short courses
(3) Includes data only for those centres present in the 2020 awarding body data and previous WEDPLASC data

Attainment gap by special educational needs (SEN) provision (16-year-olds)

Data for 2020 relating to SEN provision is only available for learners taking WJEC qualifications. To ensure a valid comparison the analysis is done using only data for centres which are present in both the 2020 WJEC data and the 2016/17-2018/19 Welsh Government attainment data.

Attainment gaps by SEN provision at cumulative grade A/7 are wider in the 2020 CAG and revised GCSE results compared to attainment gaps in results in recent years. The gap is narrower at cumulative C/4 and G/1.

Due to the overall increase in national results, both those with and without SEN provision have higher revised results in 2020 than in 2019. However, percentage point increases in A/7 grades are larger in the revised results for those who are not eligible for free school meals, which increases the attainment gap at that grade threshold.

Figure 7.7: GCSE attainment gap in cumulative results by SEN provision at key grades, 16-year-olds[1][2][3][4]

Source: 2017-2019 WEDPLASC, 2020 awarding bodies

(1) The data includes results for GCSEs graded A*-G designed for Wales as well as GCSEs graded 9-1 designed for England.
(2) Includes full course and double award science (which is double counted) GCSE, but excluding short courses.
(3) Includes data only for those centres present in the 2020 WJEC data and previous WEDPLASC data.

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Table 7.6: GCSE summer cumulative percentage results by SEN provision and percentage point attainment gaps at key grades, 16-year-olds [1][2][3]

| Year	SEN	Grades	A7	C4	G1	U
2017	On SEN register	40,800	5.5	37.3	92.8	100.0
2017	No SEN	185,075	23.1	73.7	98.4	100.0
2017	Gap (NoSEN-SEN)		17.6	36.5	5.6	0.0
2018	On SEN register	45,715	5.2	33.4	90.4	100.0
2018	No SEN	191,495	22.1	71.4	98.2	100.0
2018	Gap (NoSEN-SEN)		17.0	38.0	7.7	0.0
2019	On SEN register	49,440	5.4	35.5	92.3	100.0
2019	No SEN	207,240	22.2	72.0	98.6	100.0
2019	Gap (NoSEN-SEN)		16.8	36.6	6.4	0.0
2020 (standardised)	On SEN register	49,845	6.1	37.9	93.2	100.0
2020 (standardised)	No SEN	215,100	23.8	74.1	99.1	100.0
2020 (standardised)	Gap (NoSEN-SEN)		17.8	36.2	5.9	0.0
2020 (CAG)	On SEN register	49,845	7.7	45.8	98.4	100.0
2020 (CAG)	No SEN	215,100	28.9	81.3	99.8	100.0
2020 (CAG)	Gap (NoSEN-SEN)		21.2	35.5	1.4	0.0
2020 (revised)	On SEN register	49,845	8.1	46.7	98.6	100.0
2020 (revised)	No SEN	215,100	30.2	81.9	99.9	100.0
2020 (revised)	Gap (NoSEN-SEN)		22.1	35.2	1.2	0.0

Source: 2017-2019 WEDPLASC, 2020 awarding bodies

(1) The data includes results for GCSEs graded A*-G designed for Wales as well as GCSEs graded 9-1 designed for England.
(2) Includes full course and double award science (which is double counted) GCSE, but excluding short courses
(3) Includes data only for those centres present in the 2020 WJEC data and previous WEDPLASC data

**Results by ethnic background (16-year-olds)**

Data for 2020 relating to ethnic background is only available for learners taking WJEC qualifications. To improve the validity of the comparison, analysis is done using only data for centres which are present in both the 2020 WJEC data and the 2016/17-2018/19 Welsh Government attainment data.

Due to small sample sizes, ethnic background data has been aggregated into broader ethnic groups, categorised as per Government Statistical Service guidance[6]. Interpretation of changes in percentages needs to be treated with particular caution because of the small number of learners and centres underlying the grades for a number of the ethnic categories. Changes in percentages may reflect small changes in the absolute number of grades and learners.

Figure 7.8 shows that, at cumulative A/7 revised results are higher for every group compared to 2019 largely due to the centre assessment grades. The standardised results were also higher with the exception of the Black/African/Caribbean/Black British category where results were stable compared to 2019. A similar pattern is evident at cumulative C/4, except that standardised results are higher for each group compared to 2019 at that threshold.

Figure 7.8: GCSE summer cumulative results at A/7 by ethnic background, 16-year-olds[(1)(2)(3)]
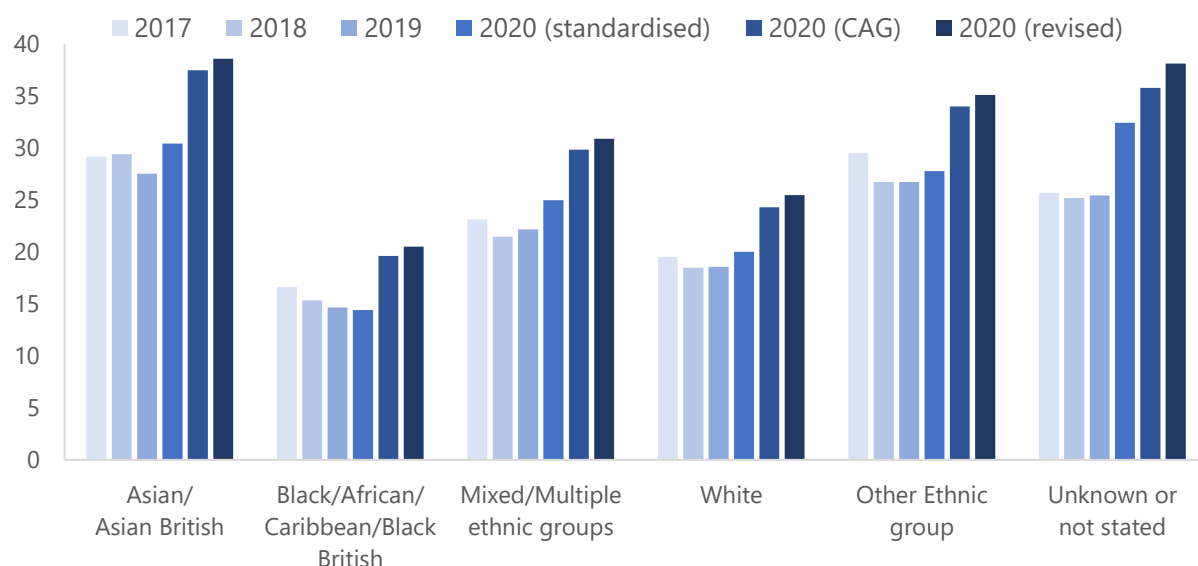
Source: 2017-2019 WEDPLASC, 2020 awarding bodies

(1) The data includes results for GCSEs graded A*-G designed for Wales as well as GCSEs graded 9-1 designed for England.
(2) Includes full course and double award science (which is double counted) GCSE, but excluding short courses.
(3) Includes data only for those centres present in the 2020 WJEC data and previous Welsh Government data.

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[6] https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/policy-store/ethnicity/#wales-

Figure 7.9: GCSE summer cumulative results at C/4 by ethnic background, 16-year-olds [1][2][3]
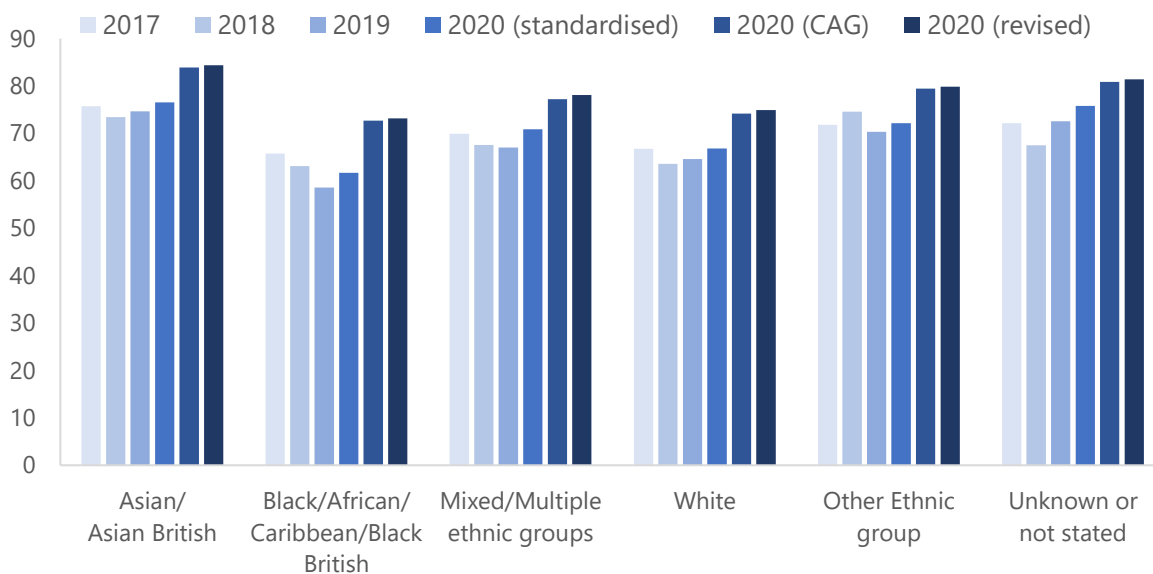
Source: 2017-2019 WEDPLASC, 2020 awarding bodies
  (1) The data includes results for GCSEs graded A*-G designed for Wales as well as GCSEs graded 9-1 designed for England.
  (2) Includes full course and double award science (which is double counted) GCSE, but excluding short courses.
  (3) Includes data only for those centres present in the 2020 WJEC data and previous Welsh Government data.

Figure 7.10: GCSE summer cumulative results at G/1 by ethnic background, 16-year-olds [1][2][3]
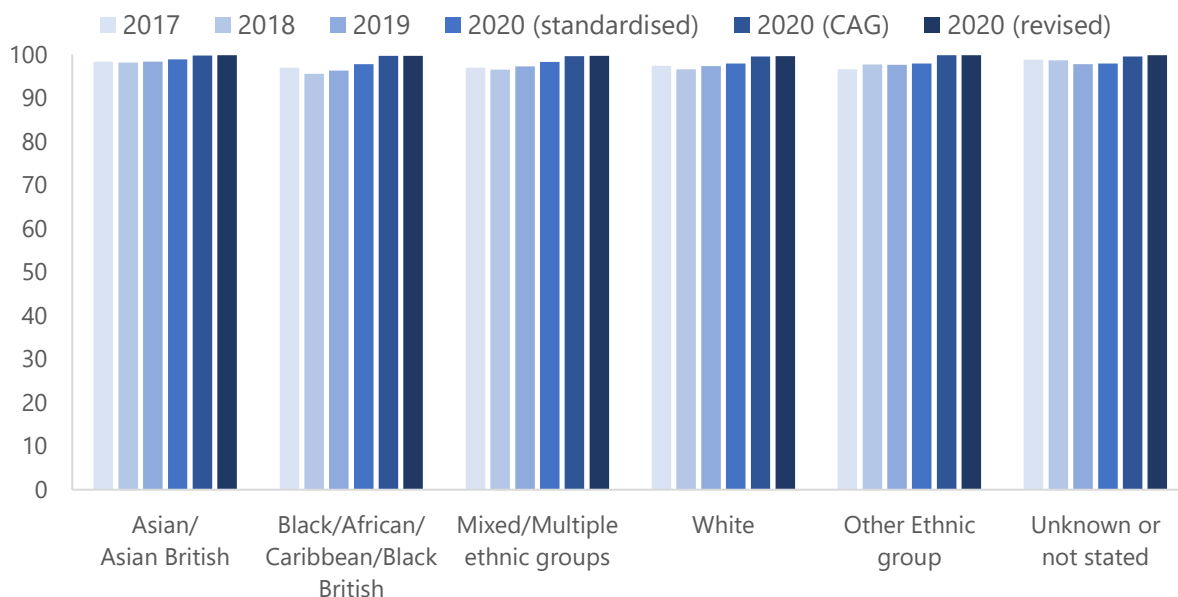
Source: 2017-2019 WEDPLASC, 2020 awarding bodies
  (1) The data includes results for GCSEs graded A*-G designed for Wales as well as GCSEs graded 9-1 designed for England.
  (2) Includes full course and double award science (which is double counted) GCSE, but excluding short courses.
  (3) Includes data only for those centres present in the 2020 WJEC data and previous Welsh Government data.

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Table 7.7: GCSE summer cumulative results by ethnic background at key grades, 16-year-olds[1][2][3]

Year	Ethnic background	Grades	Learners	A7	C4	G1	U
2017	Asian/Asian British	5,065	635	29.1	75.7	98.4	100.0
2017	Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	1,725	230	16.6	65.7	97.0	100.0
2017	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups	4,870	640	23.1	69.9	97.0	100.0
2017	White	210,465	27,900	19.5	66.8	97.4	100.0
2017	Other Ethnic group	2,340	305	29.5	71.8	96.6	100.0
2017	Unknown or not stated	1,410	175	25.7	72.1	98.9	100.0
2018	Asian/Asian British	5,445	640	29.4	73.4	98.2	100.0
2018	Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	2,050	240	15.3	63.1	95.6	100.0
2018	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups	5,520	665	21.4	67.6	96.5	100.0
2018	White	220,485	26,900	18.5	63.6	96.6	100.0
2018	Other Ethnic group	2,705	315	26.7	74.6	97.7	100.0
2018	Unknown or not stated	1,005	120	25.1	67.5	98.7	100.0
2019	Asian/Asian British	6,555	730	27.5	74.6	98.4	100.0
2019	Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	2,190	245	14.6	58.6	96.4	100.0
2019	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups	6,980	790	22.1	67.0	97.3	100.0
2019	White	236,470	27,345	18.5	64.6	97.4	100.0
2019	Other Ethnic group	3,160	350	26.7	70.3	97.7	100.0
2019	Unknown or not stated	1,320	150	25.4	72.5	97.8	100.0
2020 (standardised)	Asian/Asian British	6,635	725	30.4	76.5	98.9	100.0
2020 (standardised)	Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	2,225	265	14.4	61.7	97.8	100.0
2020 (standardised)	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups	7,170	800	25.0	70.9	98.4	100.0

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2020 (standardised)	White	244,190	27,825	20.0	66.8	98.0	100.0
2020 (standardised)	Other Ethnic group	3,395	390	27.7	72.1	97.9	100.0
2020 (standardised)	Unknown or not stated	1,335	150	32.4	75.8	98.0	100.0
2020 (CAG)	Asian/Asian British	6,635	725	37.4	83.9	99.8	100.0
2020 (CAG)	Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	2,225	265	19.6	72.7	99.7	100.0
2020 (CAG)	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups	7,170	800	29.8	77.2	99.7	100.0
2020 (CAG)	White	244,190	27,825	24.3	74.2	99.6	100.0
2020 (CAG)	Other Ethnic group	3,395	390	34.0	79.4	99.9	100.0
2020 (CAG)	Unknown or not stated	1,335	150	35.8	80.9	99.6	100.0
2020 (revised)	Asian/Asian British	6,635	725	38.5	84.4	99.8	100.0
2020 (revised)	Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	2,225	265	20.5	73.2	99.7	100.0
2020 (revised)	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups	7,170	800	30.8	78.1	99.7	100.0
2020 (revised)	White	244,190	27,825	25.4	74.9	99.6	100.0
2020 (revised)	Other Ethnic group	3,395	390	35.1	79.8	99.9	100.0
2020 (revised)	Unknown or not stated	1,335	150	38.1	81.4	99.9	100.0

Source: 2017-2019 WEDPLASC, 2020 WJEC

(1) The data includes results for GCSEs graded A*-G designed for Wales as well as GCSEs graded 9-1 designed for England.

(2) Includes full course and double award science (which is double counted) GCSE, but excluding short courses.

(3) Includes data only for those centres present in the 2020 WJEC data and previous WEDPLASC data.

8. Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate

The Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate is equivalent in size and demand to an A level. It uses the same grading scale and carries the same UCAS tariff points.

National results

Table 8.1 shows that the revised Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate grades are higher than those published on Thursday 13 August 2020, and also substantially higher than results between 2017 and 2019.

Table 8.1: Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate Revised Provisional Results 2017 - 2020 (cumulative percentage) [1]

	A*	A*-A	A*-E	Number of grades
2020 (revised)[2]	8.5	28.8	99.6	11,795
2020 (CAG)[2]	7.3	27.9	99.4	11,485
2020 (standardised)[2]	6.5	22.7	98.0	11,795
2019	4.6	21.7	97.8	11,880
2018	3.9	21.5	97.7	12,015
2017	1.5	14.6	94.0	11,120

Source: WJEC

(1) The provisional figures for 2017 – 2019 are used to provide a valid comparison to the 2020 figures which are provisional

(2) Published are the calculated results released on 13 August. Revised are results published by WJEC on 20 August 2020.

Figure 8.1: Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate summer A* results 2017-2020
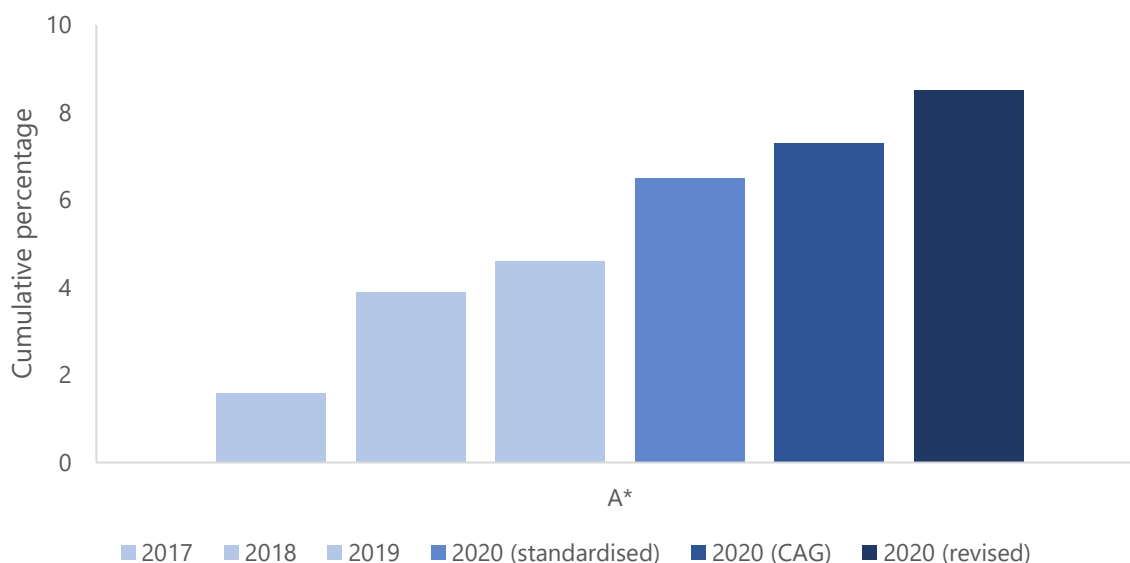
Source: WJEC

Figure 8.2: Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate summer A*-A results 2017-2020
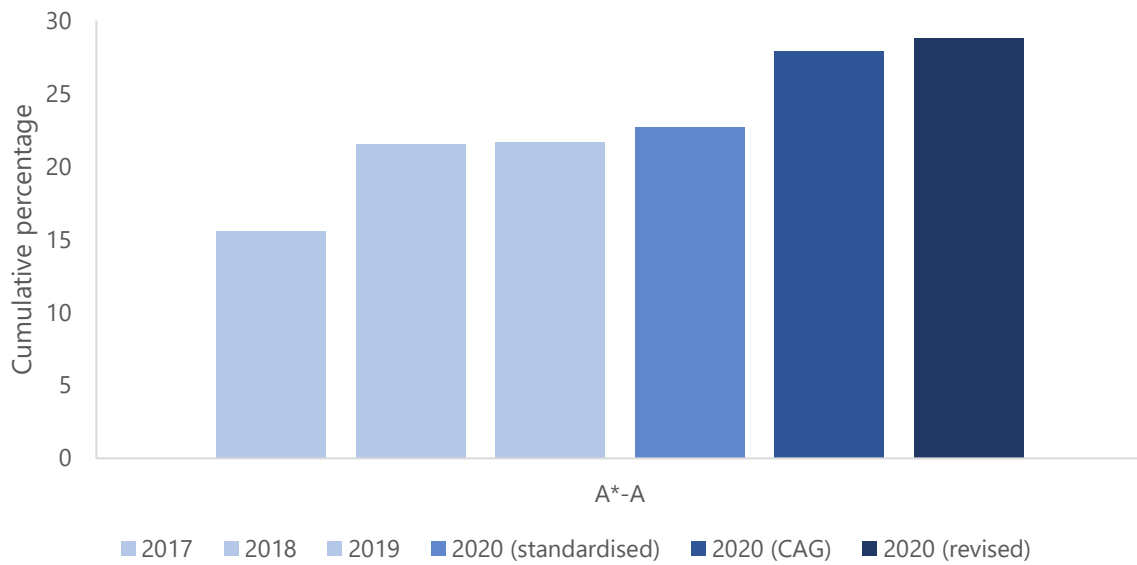
Figure 8.3: Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate summer A*-E results 2017-2020
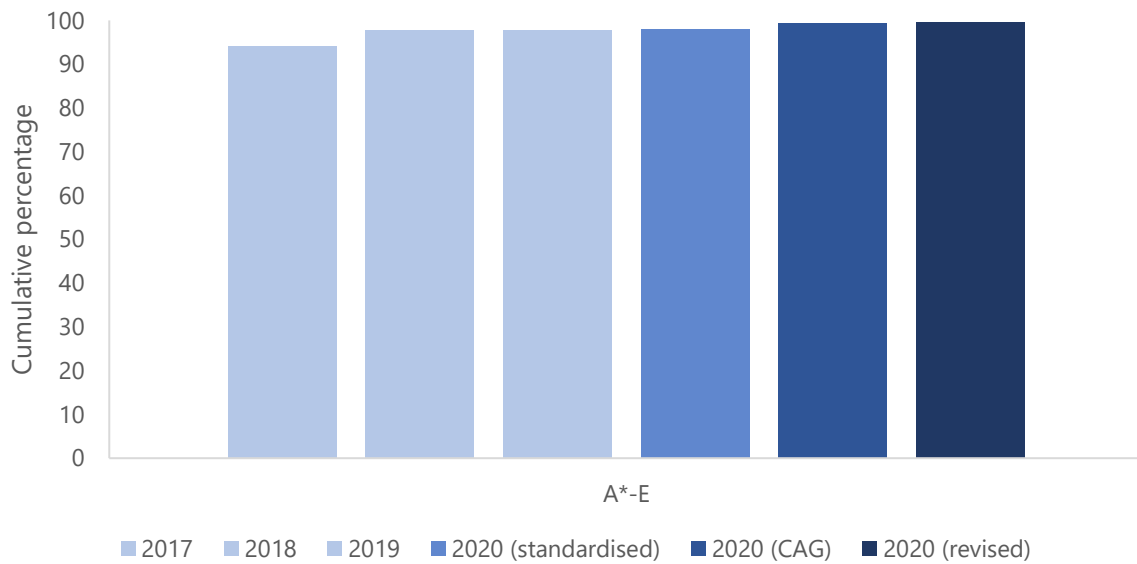
44

Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate by gender

The gender gaps have widened at A* and A*-A in the revised results, whereas the gender attainment gap at A*-E is narrower than it was previously.

Figure 8.4: Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate cumulative gender attainment gaps[1]
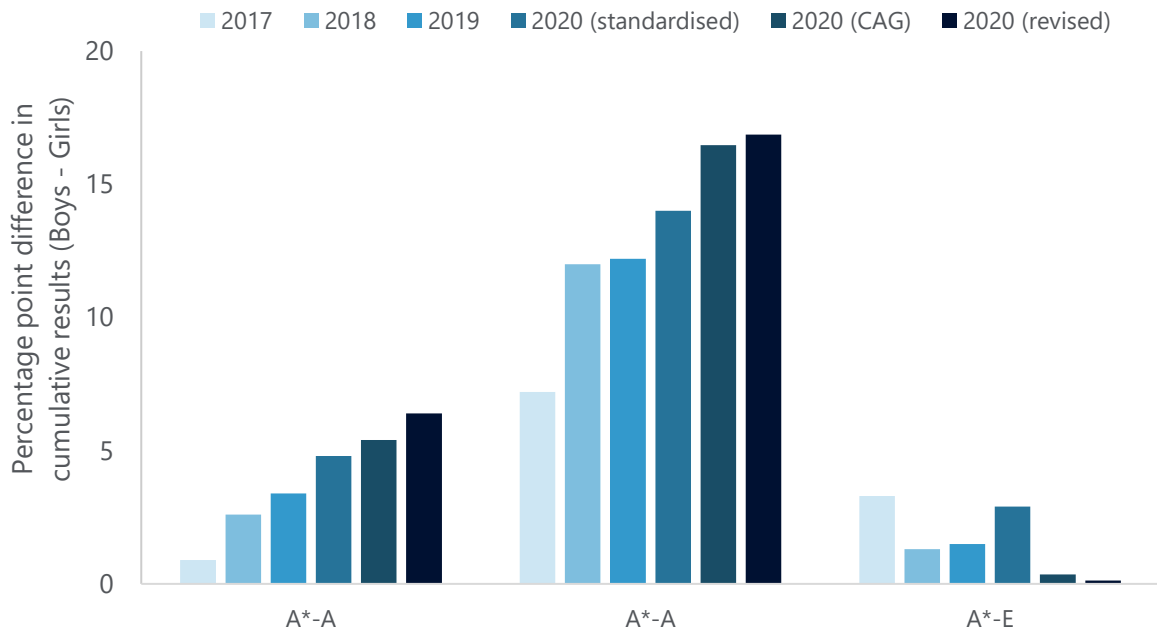
Source: WJEC

(1) The 2020 figures are provisional figures. All other figures are final results as these are the only results by gender available.

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Table 8.2: Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate Results gender attainment gaps 2017 – 2019 (cumulative percentage)[1]

Year	Gender	A*	A*-A	A*-E
2017	Girls	2.0	18.8	95.5
2017	Boys	1.1	11.6	92.2
2017	Gap (Girls - Boys)	0.9	7.2	3.3
2018	Girls	5.0	26.8	98.3
2018	Boys	2.4	14.8	97.0
2018	Gap (Girls - Boys)	2.6	12.0	1.3
2019	Girls	6.1	27.0	98.5
2019	Boys	2.7	14.8	97.0
2019	Gap (Girls - Boys)	3.4	12.2	1.5
2020 (standardised)	Girls	8.6	28.9	93.9
2020 (standardised)	Boys	3.8	14.9	96.8
2020 (standardised)	Gap (Girls - Boys)	4.8	14.0	2.9
2020 (CAG)	Girls	9.7	35.1	99.6
2020 (CAG)	Boys	4.3	18.7	99.2
2020 (CAG)	Gap (Girls – Boys)	5.4	16.5	0.4
2020 (revised)	Girls	11.4	36.2	99.6
2020 (revised)	Boys	5.0	19.3	99.5
2020 (revised)	Gap (Girls - Boys)	6.4	16.9	0.1

Source: WJEC

(1) The 2020 figures are provisional figures. All other figures are final results as these are the only results by gender available.

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9. Key Stage 4 Skills Challenge Certificate

The Key Stage 4 Skills Challenge Certificate is a level 1 / 2 qualification taken alongside GCSEs in schools.

National results

Tables 9.1 and 9.2 show that the revised calculated Key Stage 4 Skills Challenge Certificate grades are higher than results between 2017 and 2019.

Table 9.1: Key Stage 4 Skills Challenge Certificate Revised Provisional Results 2020 (cumulative percentage)

	A*	A*-A	A*-C	A*-Pass	Numbers Sat
2020 (revised)	5.7	19.9	89.1	99.5	28,200
2020 (CAG)	5.3	19.2	87.6	99.2	27,350
2020 (standardised)	3.4	14.4	84.2	98.9	28,190

Source: WJEC

Table 9.2: Key Stage 4 Skills Challenge Certificate Provisional Results 2017 – 2019 (cumulative percentage)[1]

	A*	A*-A	A*-C	A*-Pass	Numbers Sat
2019	2.7	14.0	83.9	98.5	27,345
2018	2.0	10.7	82.8	98.0	26,935
2017	1.1	7.0	67.5	92.7	21,755

Source: WJEC

   (1) The provisional figures are used to provide a valid comparison to the 2020 figures which are provisional

Figure 9.1: Key Stage 4 Skills Challenge Certificate summer A* results 2017-2020

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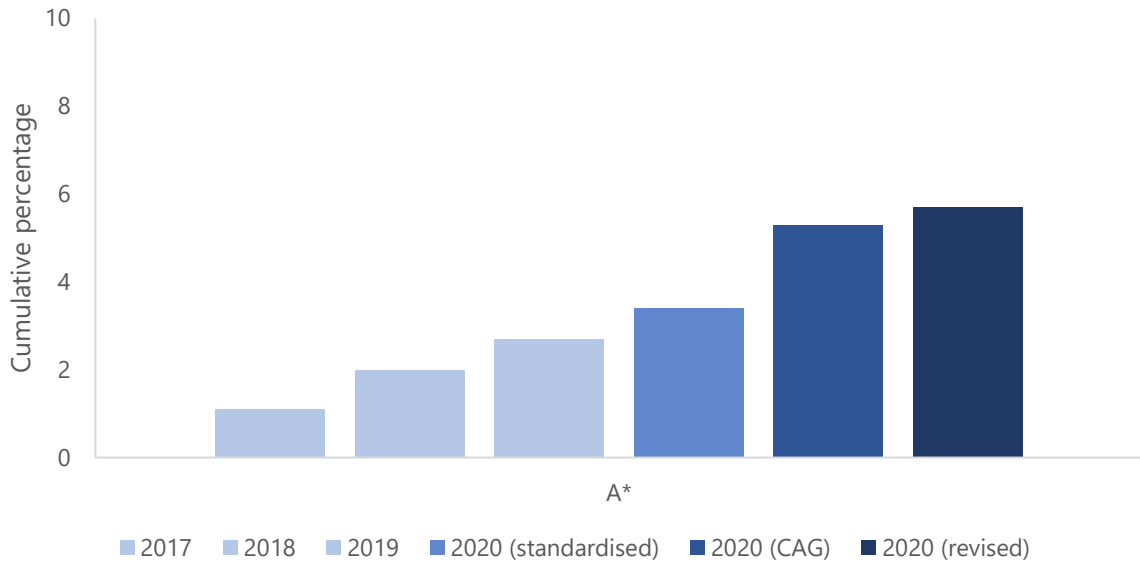
Source: WJEC

Figure 9.2: Key Stage 4 Skills Challenge Certificate summer A*-A results 2017-2020
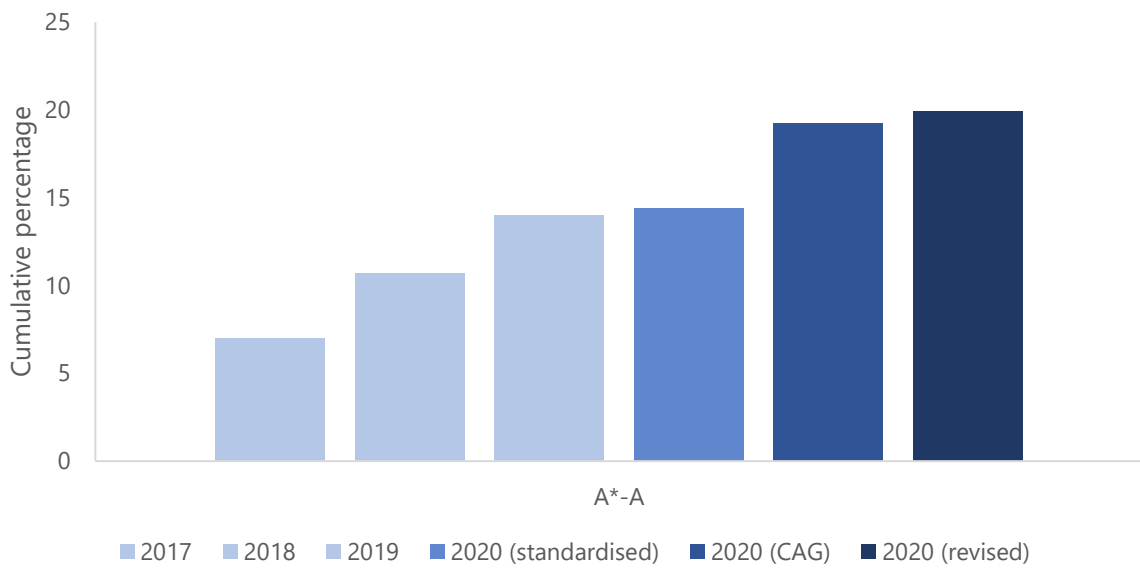
Source: WJEC

Figure 9.3: Key Stage 4 Skills Challenge Certificate summer A*-C results 2017-2020

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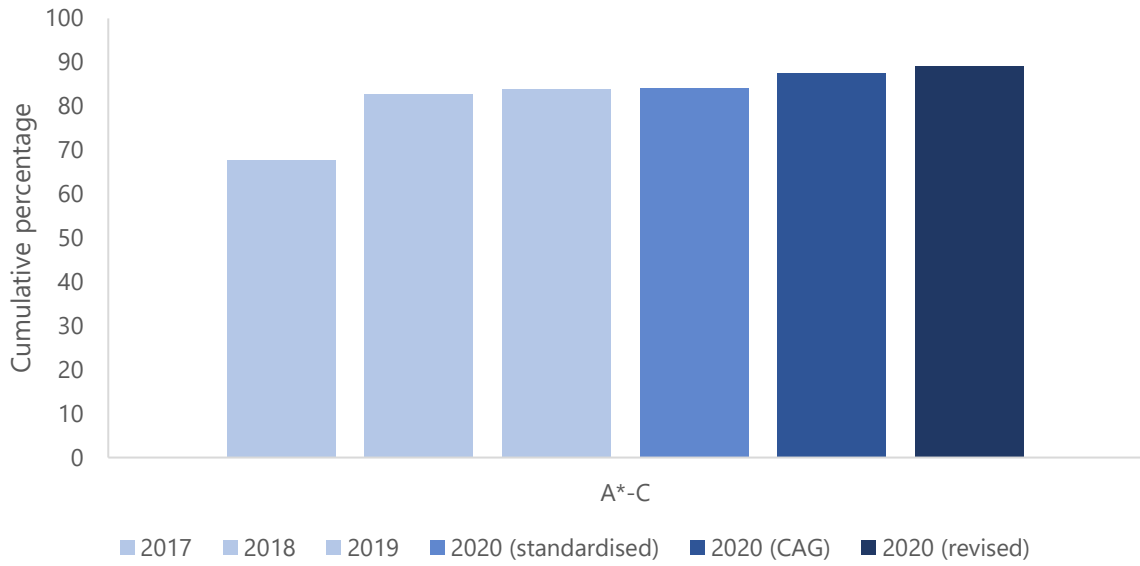
Figure 9.4: Key Stage 4 Skills Challenge Certificate summer A*-Pass results 2017-2020
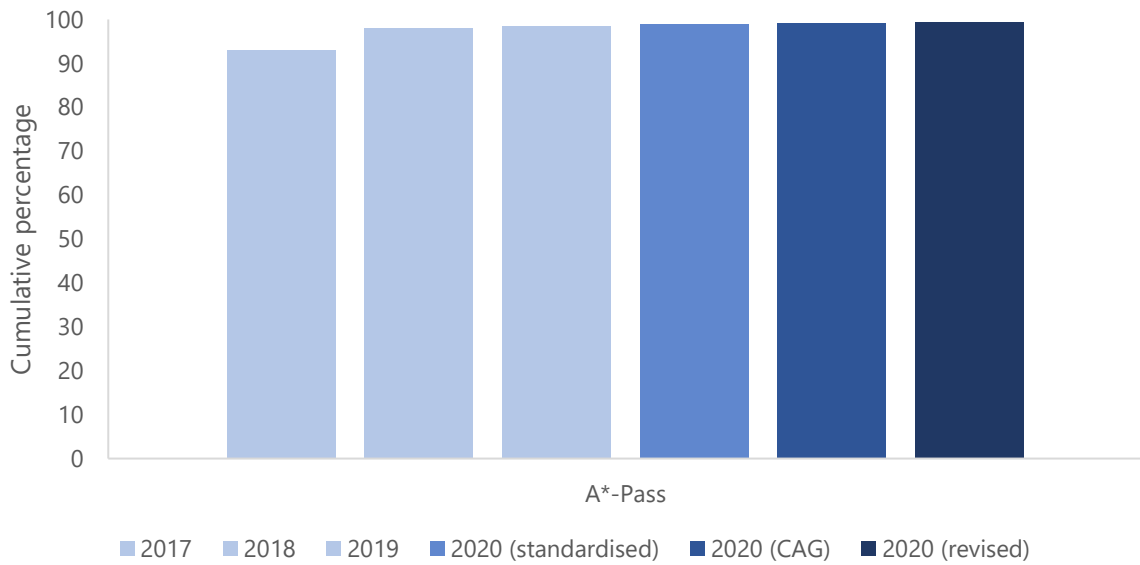
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Key Stage 4 Skills Challenge Certificate by gender

The gender gaps have widened at A* and A*-A in the revised results but narrowed at A*-C, and A*-Pass in comparison to previous years.

Figure 9.5: Key Stage 4 Skills Challenge Certificate cumulative gender attainment gaps[1]
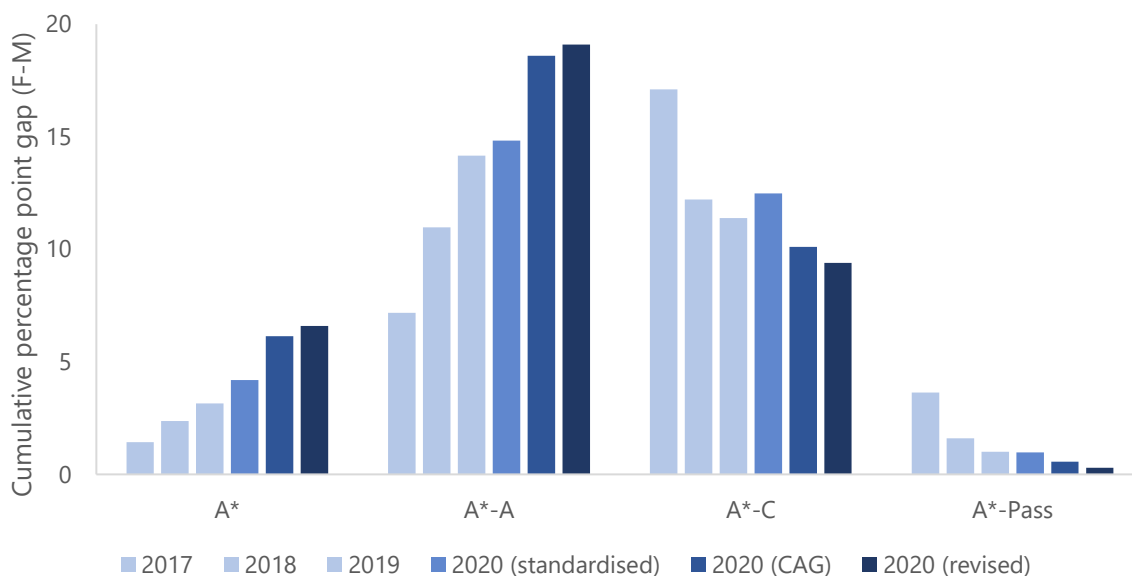
Source: WJEC

(1)   The 2020 figures are provisional figures. All other figures are final results as these are the only results by gender available.

Table 9.3: Key Stage 4 Skills Challenge Certificate Results gender attainment gaps 2017 – 2019 (cumulative percentage)[1]

Year	Gender	A*	A*-A	A*-C	A*-Pass
2017	Girls	1.8	10.6	76.2	94.7
2017	Boys	0.4	3.4	59.1	91.1
2017	Gap (Girls - Boys)	1.4	7.2	17.1	3.6
2018	Girls	3.2	16.2	88.9	98.8
2018	Boys	0.8	5.2	76.7	97.2
2018	Gap (Girls - Boys)	2.4	11.0	12.2	1.6
2019	Girls	4.3	21.0	89.5	99.0
2019	Boys	1.1	6.9	78.2	98.0
2019	Gap (Girls - Boys)	3.1	14.1	11.3	1.0
2020 (standardised)	Girls	5.5	21.9	90.5	99.4
2020 (standardised)	Boys	1.3	7.1	78.0	98.4
2020 (standardised)	Gap (Girls - Boys)	4.2	14.8	12.5	1.0
2020 (CAG)	Girls	8.4	28.6	92.7	99.4
2020 (CAG)	Boys	2.3	10.0	82.6	98.9
2020 (CAG)	Gap (Girls – Boys	6.1	18.6	10.1	0.6
2020 (revised)	Girls	9.0	29.6	93.8	99.7
2020 (revised)	Boys	2.4	10.5	84.4	99.4
2020 (revised)	Gap (Girls – Boys)	6.6	19.1	9.4	0.3

Source: WJEC

(1) The 2020 figures are provisional figures. All other figures are final results as these are the only results by gender available.

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10. Further analysis by ethnic background

It was not possible to include analysis of the attainment gap by ethnic background for AS and A level as in most ethnic background groups the number of learners is insufficient to support a robust initial analysis (see Tables 10.1 to 10.4). Analysis by ethnic background will require a more careful approach to account better for small sample sizes and confounding factors. We will build this into the more detailed equalities analysis of this summer's results that we will publish.

Table 10.1: Number of grades in available AS data by ethnic background[1] of the learner

Ethnic background	2017	2018	2019	2020
Asian/Asian British	905	890	790	1,020
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	200	220	190	245
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups	640	670	635	830
White	21,090	20,350	18,510	23,680
Other Ethnic group	345	305	365	405
Unknown or not stated	140	170	135	175

Source: Welsh Government

(1) Categorised as per Government Statistical Service advice (https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/policy-store/ethnicity/#wales-).

Table 10.2: Number of learners in available AS data by ethnic background[1]

Ethnic background	2017	2018	2019	2020
Asian/Asian British	345	320	300	365
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	85	85	80	95
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups	235	245	245	295
White	8,240	8,040	7,395	8,905
Other Ethnic group	130	120	140	145
Unknown or not stated	50	65	55	65

Source: Welsh Government

(1) Categorised as per Government Statistical Service advice (https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/policy-store/ethnicity/#wales-).

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Table 10.3: Number of grades in available A level data by ethnic background[1] of the learner

Ethnic background	2017	2018	2019	2020
Asian/Asian British	610	640	650	650
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	160	130	150	145
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups	475	505	525	530
White	19,010	18,020	17,415	16,970
Other Ethnic group	210	290	245	265
Unknown or not stated	120	115	245	115

Source: Welsh Government

(1) Categorised as per Government Statistical Service advice (https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/policy-store/ethnicity/#wales-).

Table 10.4: Number of learners in available A level data by ethnic background[1]

Ethnic background	2017	2018	2019	2020
Asian/Asian British	250	265	250	265
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	65	65	65	70
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups	190	200	215	220
White	8,040	7,585	7,305	7,185
Other Ethnic group	90	115	105	110
Unknown or not stated	50	45	95	50

Source: Welsh Government

(1) Categorised as per Government Statistical Service advice (https://gss.civilservice.gov.uk/policy-store/ethnicity/#wales-).

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Executive Committee and Council only
Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A
Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: N/A

Committee:	**Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee**
Date of meeting:	**3rd November 2020**
Report Subject:	**Summary of Inspection Outcomes for Educational Establishments – Autumn Term 2019 and Spring Term 2020**
Portfolio Holder:	**Cllr J Collins, Executive Member for Education**
Report Submitted by:	**Lynn Phillips, Interim Corporate Director of Education** **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)**
x	x	19.10.20			03.11.20	x		

1.   **Purpose of the Report**

1.1   The purpose of the report is to provide Members of the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee with important performance monitoring information regarding the inspections undertaken by ESTYN of educational establishments and an update of inspection outcomes for:
   - schools inspected during the Autumn term 2019 and Spring term 2020; and,
   - the outcomes of Estyn monitoring visits during this period.

1.2   Education and Learning Scrutiny Members will be aware that the publication of this report has been delayed as a result of the emergency response to the pandemic.

2.   **Scope and Background**

2.1   The report summarises the outcomes and recommendations of inspection reports awarded by Estyn for educational establishments inspected during this period together with reported outcomes of Estyn monitoring visits to identified settings and schools during this period.

3.   **Options for Recommendation**

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

   Option 1
   Accept the report as provided.

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

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 All education and training providers in Wales are inspected by Estyn. The current inspection framework changed in September 2017.

4.1.2 Schools and other education providers are now given judgements in relation to the 5 inspection areas of (the arrangements for early years settings are summarised in Appendix 1):

- 1. Standards,
- 2. Wellbeing and attitudes to learning
- 3.Teaching and Learning Experience
- 4. Care support and guidance and
- 5. Leadership and Management

4.1.3 With judgements now being made on a four point scale

Judgement : What the judgement means?	
Excellent	Very strong, sustained performance and practice.
Good	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement.
Adequate and needs improvement	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement.
Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths.

4.1.5 A further breakdown of what each inspection area covers is shown in appendix 1.

4.1.6 Recommendations to secure further improvement are always made in all inspection reports. The school/setting are expected to address these recommendations through their improvement planning processes. Schools and education settings are supported to devise their plans by the Education Achievement Service (EAS).   The EAS approve all plans and also monitor progress through the plans.

4.1.7 Where necessary, Intervention Plans are drawn up and progress is monitored more formally through a School Causing Concern (SCC) process that operates in accordance with the regional South East Wales Consortium (SEWC) Schools Causing Concern Policy.

4.1.8 Depending on the result of the inspection, Estyn determines the level of follow-up which the school requires. An explanation of the difference between the levels of follow-up activity is shown in appendix 1.

4.1.9 **Blaenau Gwent Wellbeing Plan**

The Estyn inspection framework is clearly aligned to the objectives in the Blaenau Gwent Wellbeing 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)*

There are no direct financial implications for this report. Blaenau Gwent continues to make a financial contribution to the regional Education Achievement Service (EAS) arrangements of approximately £300,000 per annum. As a part of the Council's arrangements for intervention in schools in line with the South East Wales Consortium (SEWC) framework, there are occasions when additional funding is required to support schools through the use of external agencies particularly, when an adverse inspection report is received. Any funding required is allocated from within current budgets within the Education Directorate portfolio.

5.2 *Risk including Mitigating Actions*

The Estyn inspection Framework focuses primarily on standards, the quality of education provision and the quality of leadership in educational establishments and schools. Failure to identify schools and provide support appropriately places at risk the quality of education and standards in individual schools. The Estyn Inspection Framework provides an external viewpoint through which potential risk is identified and resolved. Moreover, the public nature of Estyn inspection reports also poses reputational risk to the individual school or setting and to the Council as a whole should an adverse report be published, and the Council's role is to ensure that high standards and quality of provision are maintained in all settings.

Failure to ensure that there is robust monitoring of settings and of Council services carries with it a number of significant risks:
- Undetected and unaddressed decline in school performance and the quality of provision.
- Students do not achieve to acceptable levels.
- Lack of overall improvement in schools' performance.

- Children do not receive the best start in life
- Negative impact on the reputation of the Council.

Similarly, ineffective monitoring of Council services also poses a range of risks including:
- Reducing standards and quality of provision in settings,
- Poor value for money,
- Ineffective support for settings which hinders their improvement,
- Negative impact on the reputation of the Council.

Through the monitoring of performance by means of Estyn reports, the Scrutiny Committee ensures that educational settings and supporting services are able to deliver provision of a high quality.

5.3 **Legal**
Estyn is a Crown body, established under the Education Act 1992.

5.4 **Human Resources**
None for this report.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

6.1.1 During the reporting period three establishments were inspected with no monitoring visits during the period.

6.1.2 **Brynmawr Foundation School**

Brynmawr Foundation School was inspected by Estyn in December 2019. The inspectors awarded a judgement against all four inspection areas of 'unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement' and against the inspection area of care support and guidance a judgement of 'adequate and needs improvement' was recorded. The Estyn report is attached as appendix 2.

Estyn made four recommendations for improvement and these are summarised below:

- R1 Improve pupils' standards across the school, including their literacy and numeracy skills
- R2 Improve pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning
- R3 Improve the effectiveness of teaching to motivate, engage and challenge pupils to make good progress in lessons
- R4 Strengthen leadership at all levels to improve leaders' ability to identify areas for development and to plan effectively for improvement

The report recognises that 'Since 2018, the Headteacher has worked positively with staff and pupils to create stability following a period of uncertainty and change. He has instigated a programme of change across the school that focuses appropriately on strengthening leadership at all levels and developing teaching. Staff are engaging enthusiastically in professional learning. However, these changes have not had a sufficient impact on important areas of the school's work such as teaching and pupils' standards. Although pupils make strong progress in a few lessons, in a majority of lessons, many pupils do not make enough progress. The school has a supportive and inclusive ethos. Many pupils are confident in their social interactions. However, many pupils are not suitably resilient or motivated in their lessons, and this hinders their learning. "

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Estyn were of the opinion that, that special measures were required in relation to this school. Subsequently, the school has drawn up a Post Inspection Action Plan that details how it is going to address the recommendations and the Local Authority and EAS has drafted a statement of action as to how it will support the school. In line with agreed procedures for schools in an Estyn Category a meeting took place on 27th February 2020 at which the Post Inspection Action Plan (PIAP) was reviewed and feedback provided by Estyn as to how the action plan may be furthered strengthened. Moving forward, Estyn will monitor the school's progress on a termly basis. However, given the present pandemic the approach to a return to business as usual activities is yet to be determined but this is likely to be a key activity at the commencement of the new academic session.

6.1.3 **Cwm Primary School**

Cwm Primary School was inspected by Estyn in December 2019. The inspectors awarded a judgement against all five inspection areas of "Good." The Estyn report is attached as appendix 3.

Estyn has also invited the school to prepare a case study on its work in relation to intergenerational community work, for dissemination on Estyn's website. Estyn made three recommendations for improvement and these are summarised below:

- R1 Ensure that pupils in the foundation phase have meaningful opportunities to develop as independent learners
- R2 Ensure that teachers match activities to the needs of pupils of all abilities, particularly the least able
- R3 Improve the quality of presentation, spelling and punctuation in key stage 2

The report recognises that "Cwm Primary School plays a key role at the heart of its community. Staff place great importance on the happiness of pupils and recognise that all pupils need to feel safe, secure and valued in order to be able to learn and make progress. As a result, standards of wellbeing in the school are very high.

Teachers and teaching assistants deliver learning activities that engage pupils and encourage them to want to learn. They integrate aspects of Welsh culture and local history well. Staff use the Welsh language frequently and encourage its use among pupils effectively. As a result, standards in Welsh are a particular strength.

The Headteacher sets a clear vision for the school based around pupil wellbeing. She works with other leaders, teachers and teaching assistant in a series of teams that encourage all to develop their leadership skills and contribute to school improvement. The school works well with other providers to improve the quality of its provision and share its strengths.

6.1.4 **Ysgol Gymraeg Brohelyg**

Ysgol Gymraeg Brohelyg was inspected by Estyn in February 2020. The inspectors awarded a judgement against four inspection areas of "Good" and "Adequate and need improvement" against the inspection area of teaching and learning experiences. The Estyn report is attached as appendix 4. Estyn made three recommendations for improvement and these are summarised below:

- R1 Ensure that teaching and learning experiences develop the independence of all pupils in the foundation phase consistently
- R2 Improve provision to develop pupils' ICT skills across the school
- R3 Strengthen self-evaluation and planning for improvement procedures in order to prioritise and address the most important areas

The report recognises that "The school is a caring and hard-working community which provides a firm foundation for pupils' learning from an early age, particularly in acquiring the Welsh language. The Headteacher and staff have high expectations of pupils and, as a result, most make good progress during their time at the school. Staff organise purposeful interventions for pupils, which succeed in supporting them to improve their literacy and numeracy skills, and wellbeing, well.

Across the school, most pupils show enthusiasm towards their learning. They respect others well and work diligently in pairs and groups. Classes are organised and industrious places in which most pupils persevere well with their tasks. However, not all pupils in the foundation phase are given enough opportunities to enable them to make their own decisions and become independent learners. Staff plan valuable opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy and numeracy skills consistently in their work. However, they do not plan purposefully enough to develop pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills.

The Headteacher has a clear vision to realise the aim of 'setting a firm foundation for a bright future'. The school has established a hard-working management team that has succeeded in leading significant improvements successfully over time. However, processes for self-evaluation and planning

for improvement do not always focus enough on the most important priorities in order to move the school forward."

6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***
Monitoring of inspection reports 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.

6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***
The Estyn Inspection Framework is delivered in accordance with National regulation.

6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***
The Estyn Inspection Framework is focused on securing long term improvement in settings. It is one of a number of triggers through which additional monitoring and support can be targeted at a setting to secure strong and continuing prospects for improvement. However, 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.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***
A key element of the Council's work is to work with the EAS to ensure that settings are regularly monitored so that appropriate support is in place and high standards are secured. Estyn Inspection reports reflect the extent to which settings and Local Authorities have been effective in achieving this. The vast majority of recent inspection reports in Blaenau Gwent settings have demonstrated that the Council has achieved this goal.

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. The Council also secures a range of provision to support vulnerable learners through regional arrangement as well as support for its early years settings.

6.7 ***Integration(across service areas)***
The Estyn Inspection Framework is aimed at promoting high quality leadership, excellent standards and high quality education provision. This aim is fundamental to the Council's well-being objectives and is fundamental to the joint work between Education and Social Services Directorates.

6.8 ***EqIA***
Not required for this report.

7.   **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1   Monitoring of inspection reports 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's services to account effectively for the quality of education provision and pupil outcomes.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- Appendix 1 – School Inspection Framework
- Appendix 2 – Brynmawr Foundation School
- Appendix 3 – Cwm Primary School
- Appendix 4 – Ysgol Bro Helyg

Overview of Current Inspection Framework	
Inspection Area	
1	**Standards**
	1.1 Standards and progress overall **1.2** Standards and progress of specific groups **1.3** Standards and progress in skills
2.	**Wellbeing and attitudes to learning**
	2.1 Wellbeing **2.2** Attitudes to learning
3	**Teaching and Learning Experience**
	3.1 Quality of teaching **3.2** The breadth, balance and appropriateness of the curriculum **3.3** Provision for skills
4	**Care, support and guidance**
	4.1 Tracking, monitoring and the provision of learning support **4.2** Personal development **4.3** Safeguarding
5	**Leadership and Management**
	5.1 Quality and effectiveness of leaders and managers **5.2** Self-evaluation processes and improvement planning **5.3** Professional learning **5.4** Use of resources

Inspection Arrangements for Early Years Settings

Members will be aware that the inspection framework under which early years settings were inspected differs from the school framework which is presently reported with the provision being assessed against the three key questions:

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management

As a result of the inspection, the setting's current performance and prospects for improvement are assessed against a four-point judgement scale which is shown below:

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement

| Unsatisfactory | Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths |

Post Inspection Follow up Arrangements

- **Estyn review** (formerly Estyn monitoring) - Normally, schools will require this level of activity when the judgement for inspection area 5, leadership and management, is adequate and needs improvement. It would be possible that a few inspection areas have been judged as good. However, the school would have some important areas for improvement that require monitoring.

- **Significant improvement** - The inspection report will state that in accordance with the Education Act 2005 HMCI is of the opinion that this school is in need of significant improvement. Schools in need of **significant improvement** are likely to have fewer important areas for improvement than schools in need of special measures. If inspectors have seriously considered, but rejected, the judgement that the school is in need of special measures, it is highly likely that it will come into the category of schools requiring significant improvement.

- **Special measures -** The inspection report will state that In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that special measures are required in relation to this school. Schools identified as in need of **special measures** during a core inspection are likely to have many important areas for improvement in their work. Some schools may have a few important areas for improvement to a very marked degree or many areas for improvement to a lesser degree. In most instances, it will be the cumulative weight and effect of a combination of these areas for improvement which, when taken together, will prompt the judgement that a school is not providing an acceptable standard of education. While one feature alone is unlikely to result in a judgement that a school requires special measures, where inspectors find low standards and poor teaching and learning, significant risks to pupils or the likelihood of a breakdown of discipline, the school will normally require special measures.

  For some educational establishments / schools there will be no follow-up activity.

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

Brynmawr Foundation School
Intermediate Road
Brynmawr
Blaenau Gwent
NP23 4XT

Date of inspection: October 2019

by

Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education
and Training in Wales

About Brynmawr Foundation School

Brynmawr Foundation School is an 11-16 mixed comprehensive school in Blaenau Gwent local authority. The school became grant maintained in 1992 and assumed foundation status in 1999.

There are 699 pupils on roll, compared with 751 pupils at the time of the last inspection in 2013.

The school serves Brynmawr and the surrounding area. About 22% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is above the Wales average of 16.4% for secondary schools. A very few pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and English is spoken as the first language in nearly all pupils' homes.

Nearly 21% of pupils are on the school's special educational needs register, which is just under the national average of 22.9%. Around 2% of pupils have a statement of special educational needs compared with 2.2% for Wales as a whole.

The headteacher took up his post as temporary headteacher in September 2018. He became the substantive headteacher in April 2019. The senior leadership team consists of the headteacher, one deputy headteacher, three assistant headteachers and one business manager. None of the current team was in post at the time of the last inspection.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website at the link below.
http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk/Schools/SchoolSearch?lang=en

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Summary

Since 2018, the headteacher has worked positively with staff and pupils to create stability following a period of uncertainty and change. He has instigated a programme of change across the school that focuses appropriately on strengthening leadership at all levels and developing teaching. Staff are engaging enthusiastically in professional learning. However, these changes have not had a sufficient impact on important areas of the school's work such as teaching and pupils' standards. Although pupils make strong progress in a few lessons, in a majority of lessons, many pupils do not make enough progress.

The school has a supportive and inclusive ethos. Many pupils are confident in their social interactions. However, many pupils are not suitably resilient or motivated in their lessons, and this hinders their learning.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	**Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement**
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	**Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement**
Teaching and learning experiences	**Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement**
Care, support and guidance	**Adequate and needs improvement**
Leadership and management	**Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement**

Recommendations

R1 Improve pupils' standards across the school, including their literacy and numeracy skills

R2 Improve pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning

R3 Improve the effectiveness of teaching to motivate, engage and challenge pupils to make good progress in lessons

R4 Strengthen leadership at all levels to improve leaders' ability to identify areas for development and to plan effectively for improvement

What happens next

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that special measures are required in relation to this school. The school will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress on a termly basis.

Main findings

Standards: Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement

In a majority of lessons, pupils of all abilities generally do not make enough progress. They do not recall or use prior learning well enough, nor do they develop their skills sufficiently, particularly in literacy and numeracy. This is an important shortcoming.

In a few lessons, many pupils make strong progress. For example, in drama, Year 11 pupils work productively to devise dramatic pieces that develop their subject skills and their understanding of Brechtian style theatre.

A minority of pupils listen well to the teacher. However, a majority do not listen with sufficient attention and miss information and instructions that would benefit their learning. In many lessons, many pupils are reluctant to enter into discussion or to answer questions about their work. They are often diffident or unsure, and offer only limited verbal responses. In a few lessons, a few more able pupils speak fluently, using a wide range of vocabulary.

In a few classes, at key stage 4, many pupils analyse and respond to more complex texts well. For example, they identify that a poet uses particular words and phrases to help elicit sympathy from the reader. They comment thoughtfully on contentious issues and ideas, using the text to support their opinions when, for example, commenting on the poor and violent treatment of black people in the United States in the past. Many pupils have a useful range of strategies to extract information and ideas from simple texts. However, a majority are careless in transferring and assimilating information derived from their reading into their own work. In general, many pupils struggle with inference and deduction.

At key stage 4, a few, more able pupils produce effective creative writing, with vivid description and a wide vocabulary. They produce writing that is technically correct and structured suitably, which engages and sustains the reader's interest. However, a majority of pupils make frequent basic errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar. They do not express their ideas clearly, draw upon a suitably wide vocabulary, or use the full range of punctuation to clarify meaning strongly enough.

Overall, pupils do not develop their numeracy skills sufficiently in suitable contexts.

Pupils develop their information and communication technology (ICT) skills well in only a very few subjects. For example, in design technology they use computer aided design to explore design solutions, and present their ideas effectively using a suitable range of graphics applications.

A few pupils develop their creative skills well, for example in art when investigating a range of imaginative sources to explore their ideas. However, generally, pupils do not practise their creative thinking often enough in subjects across the curriculum, and the development of creativity and thinking is often hindered by teaching approaches.

Many pupils develop their physical skills suitably in subjects such as physical education, for example when controlling the ball through dribbling and passing in football.

A majority of pupils make satisfactory progress in their Welsh language skills. They write basic sentences with suitable accuracy and develop their reading skills appropriately. However, many pupils provide short, underdeveloped verbal responses to questions. Many pupils do not develop their writing skills sufficiently, and make frequent basic errors in their grammar. Very few pupils use their Welsh outside of Welsh lessons.

Pupils' progress has declined over the past few years and in 2018 they made much less progress than expected. The performance of pupils eligible for free schools meals has fluctuated. Overall, pupils' performance does not compare favourably with that in similar schools.

At the end of Year 11, nearly all pupils progress to further education, training or employment.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement

Pupils are confident that staff deal competently with any bullying that is reported. However, almost one-in-four pupils of those who completed the questionnaire do not feel safe in school. A minority of pupils do not behave well in lessons and around the school and a few are regularly late to lessons. Occasionally this disrupts their own learning and that of others.

A few pupils are ambitious, confident and capable, independent learners. However, many pupils do not demonstrate suitable motivation, concentration and perseverance throughout their lessons to ensure that tasks are completed successfully. As a result, they make insufficient progress.

Many pupils have positive social skills and are confident and polite in their interactions with adults around the school. Many pupils show respect to visitors. For example, they open doors and say 'thank you' when doors are opened for them.

The school council has a valuable understanding of the rights of the child, and has worked purposefully to develop a 'pupil manifesto' that is displayed in every classroom. A few pupils, who are part of the school council, have worked on an appropriate range of initiatives linked to healthy choices and the environment. This includes increasing the number of water fountains, reviewing the choice of healthy drinks in the canteen and introducing recycling bins. However, a majority of pupils do not have a good enough understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle.

A few pupils deliver whole school assemblies throughout the year on key issues linked to the development of pupils as ethical, informed citizens. Themes include mental health awareness, hate crimes, young carers and the work of the Show Racism the Red Card organisation. Many pupils engage positively in local, national and global charity events throughout the year. However, apart from through the school council, pupils do not develop their leadership skills well enough.

Many pupils participate eagerly in the annual school production, most recently 'Grease'. Pupils engage enthusiastically in a range of extracurricular activities. Levels of participation in sport and drama clubs are high.

Pupils' attendance has mostly been above expectations over the last four years.

Teaching and learning experiences: Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement

In a majority of lessons, teachers explain tasks usefully, and in a few provide useful models to help pupils organise their work. In these lessons, most pupils are aware of what teachers expect. A few teachers use an appropriately diverse range of approaches to help pupils to improve their skills and understanding. For example, in English, teachers introduce supplementary resources that complement the class text well. This allows pupils to make useful links between a range of writing on a similar theme. In a minority of lessons, teachers build positive relationships with pupils and a few teachers create a very productive learning environment.

In a majority of lessons, learning is over-directed by the teacher. This means that pupils do not explore ideas well enough or deepen their understanding. Teachers spend too much time talking, at the expense of engaging pupils in the learning. In many lessons, teachers question pupils simply in order to recall basic information. A very few expect, or ask for, more than short, simple responses. They do not use questioning well to probe and test pupils' understanding. As a result, pupils do not develop their thinking or verbal skills well enough. In around half of lessons, teachers have too low an expectation of pupils and do not challenge weaker work. Many teachers do not tailor work to pupils' individual needs carefully enough. They do not challenge more able pupils, and do not support pupils who need help well enough. As a result, in a majority of lessons, pupils make insufficient progress.

A majority of teachers monitor pupils' work in lessons beneficially. They offer encouragement and praise, and a minority help pupils to understand appropriately where their work needs strengthening. Most teachers provide pupils with written comments on their work, which helps pupils to identify where they need to correct misspelt words or edit inaccurate punctuation. However, in only a few cases does feedback identify and explain well enough how pupils can improve the quality of their work. As a result, pupils do not always understand their strengths, or what they need to do to make their work better. Overall, feedback does not have enough impact on improving pupils' work.

The school provides a suitable and balanced curriculum, which broadly meets the needs of pupils of all abilities. There is a relevant range of learning pathways for pupils as they progress into key stage 4, where they can choose from an appropriate range of academic and vocational courses. The flexibility in these pathways enables all pupils to have sufficient freedom in their option choices. However, arrangements for physical education in key stage 4 do not ensure that pupils have weekly opportunities to partake in exercise.

The school offers an appropriate range of extra-curricular and after-school activities that support pupils' social development well. For example, pupils engage enthusiastically in the drama and music club production of West Side Story. The

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school provides a few beneficial experiences to develop pupils' interests in their areas of learning. For example, art and drama students have the opportunity to visit art galleries and theatres in London.

There are suitable transition links with local primary schools. A collaborative literacy project has been developed to ensure a common understanding and shared expectations of pupil progress and opportunities. However, the school does not review pupils' achievement at key stage 2 robustly enough to identify paths to extend knowledge, understanding and skills.

There are worthwhile partnerships with local and national businesses that enhance learning experiences, for example workshops to encourage girls to follow careers in engineering and science.

The school provides very few worthwhile opportunities for pupils to learn about sustainable development and global citizenship through the curriculum and extra-curricular activities.

At present, the provision for literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum is underdeveloped. Recently, the provision of all skills has been included in schemes of work, for all subjects, at all levels. However, most teachers do not include appropriate opportunities for the progressive development of skills within their lessons. As a result, the provision overall does not provide suitable opportunities to develop pupils' skills well enough.

Overall, there are very few opportunities for pupils to develop their Welsh language skills apart from in Welsh lessons. There are a few beneficial opportunities to extend pupils' use of Welsh through extracurricular activities such as trips to Llangrannog and Glan-llyn residential centres. However, the school does not promote bilingualism effectively, and does not plan purposefully enough to develop pupils' Welsh language skills.

Care, support and guidance: Adequate and needs improvement

Brynmawr Foundation School has a supportive and inclusive ethos. The pastoral transition arrangements with feeder primaries are effective and provide valuable support for the most vulnerable pupils.

The school has appropriate systems to identify pupils who are at risk of underachieving. They provide a suitable range of intervention strategies for these pupils, such as mentoring sessions and nurture groups. However, they do not monitor the impact of intervention closely or consistently enough, and it is too early to judge any impact on improving pupils' standards.

Pupils' attendance is monitored successfully and the school provides suitable interventions where required. These actions contribute beneficially to pupils' rates of attendance. However, the school's arrangements to track progress and other aspects of wellbeing are at an early stage of development. Leaders and teachers do not use the information they gather well enough to monitor pupils' progress, or to support improvements in behaviour and attitudes to learning.

The school provides pupils with appropriate advice and guidance to help them make informed decisions about their future learning and career choices. It uses worthwhile links with local businesses to support this work, for example curriculum vitae writing workshops.

Interim reports provide parents with useful information. However, in a minority of cases annual reports to parents do not contain sufficiently clear targets for improvement. In addition, communication with parents, and particularly those who do not have access to the internet or social media, is not effective.

The school has developed a new behaviour policy. There is a points system to record positive behaviour, constructive contributions to learning and incidents of poor behaviour in lessons. However, it is too early to measure the effectiveness of this in addressing the negative and disruptive behaviour of a minority of pupils in lessons and around the school, and on improving pupils' attitudes to learning.

The school provides suitable opportunities for pupils to work with outside agencies to support their personal, social and emotional development. It works productively with parents and outside agencies to provide appropriate guidance and support for the more vulnerable pupils. However, only a limited number of staff have had training to feel confident enough to support pupils effectively with a range of wellbeing issues, for example when implementing restorative practice interventions.

There is efficient identification of pupils with special educational needs (SEN). Individual development plans are appropriate and shared well with staff and parents. However, these plans are not used well enough in lessons. In addition, the school does not measure the impact of individual interventions robustly enough.

The personal and social education programme supports the moral, social and cultural development of pupils suitably and promotes diversity and equality appropriately. However, the use of tutor-led pastoral sessions to support the development of spiritual guidance for pupils is inconsistent.

The school's arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking are appropriate. However, a majority of pupils do not have a sufficient understanding of healthy living and a minority continue to make unhealthy choices.

The school provides an appropriate range of extra-curricular activities, including educational visits. It offers a narrow range of opportunities to take on responsibilities and become active citizens within the school and wider community. These are available to all pupils. A few of these opportunities are particularly beneficial, for example pupils leading a sign language class in school for peers and staff.

The school has suitable systems in place to deal with any instances of bullying and arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Leadership and management: Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement

Following a period of consistently poor outcomes, low staff morale and uncertain leadership, the newly appointed headteacher has embarked on a programme of change. This work is focused on improving leadership at all levels, addressing shortcomings in teaching, and making sure these aspects have a positive impact on

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pupil standards in lessons. In the process of introducing a culture of high expectations, the headteacher is mindful of the need to gain the trust and support of staff and the school community, and this is having a positive impact on staff engagement and wellbeing.

The headteacher has set about establishing systems and processes to build the capacity of staff to improve pupil standards and wellbeing. He has appointed a new senior team and has restructured suitably the middle leadership. Roles and responsibilities have been reviewed, and senior and middle leaders are beginning to understand their accountability for pupil standards and wellbeing. However, leaders, overall, do not have a strong enough understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement in pupils' learning and in teaching. This limits their capacity to focus on actions that will have greatest impact. In many areas the changes made have not had a sufficient impact on pupil standards in lessons and over time, particularly in mathematics and science.

The composition and leadership of the governing body has been strengthened to increase its capacity to challenge. Governors provide useful and robust challenge in relation to budget and finance. They are increasingly willing to question and challenge other aspects of the school's work, for example when scrutinising a new behaviour policy. Governors are aware that they have a responsibility to scrutinise standards but do not have a sufficiently strong understanding of standards in lessons and the progress made by pupils.

Generally, senior leaders use a range of data appropriately to analyse and compare trends in performance. As a result, they are able to identify the departments most in need of support. However, the over-focus on outcomes at key stage 4 has limited leaders' evaluation of pupils' progress and standards in lessons.

The school has recently implemented a suitable calendar of self-evaluation and improvement planning activities. This is beginning to increase the range of first hand evidence that they gather about the school's work. Leaders have identified suitably the overarching aspects that require improvement. However, the culture of self-evaluation is in its early stages of development and leaders do not identify strengths or areas for improvement sharply enough.

The recently introduced faculty reviews have supported the school to begin to collect evidence about standards and teaching. These reviews include activities such as lesson observations, work scrutiny and pupil voice. In addition, leaders have introduced whole school book scrutiny to encourage all staff to engage in a professional dialogue about teaching and learning. However, these activities focus too heavily on routines instead of the impact that activities have on pupil progress. This prevents senior leaders from being able to draw accurate conclusions about the strengths and weaknesses in important aspects of the school's, work such as teaching. In addition, leaders at all levels are too generous in their evaluation of teaching and do not identify the most important weaknesses in teaching for individuals or at a whole school level. This is hampering their ability to prioritise and plan for improvement.

Middle leaders are beginning to engage in self-evaluation activities such as work scrutiny and learning walks. However, most middle leaders do not have a good

enough understanding of the features of effective teaching or progress. As a result, they have had limited impact in improving the quality of teaching or the standards that pupils achieve in lessons.

The school has recently introduced a timetable of professional learning. This has supported leaders to develop a culture where most staff feel valued. However, self-evaluation processes are not enabling leaders to plan professional learning opportunities sharply enough to secure improvements in the most important aspects of their work. In addition, they do not evaluate the impact of professional learning well enough. As a result, professional learning has not been successful in improving important aspects of teaching. For example, work on improving questioning has had limited impact on classroom practice.

The school has taken robust action to address the deficit budget and implemented a plan to reduce it significantly over the next five years.

Planning for the use of grant funding is broadly suitable. However, the pupil development grant is insufficiently focused on pupils eligible for free school meals. The school does not evaluate the impact of grant funding on pupil standards and wellbeing, apart from key stage 4 outcomes and attendance.

The provision of learning support assistance is low and a very few subjects have sufficient staffing levels to provide pupils with subject specialists. In many subjects, resources are insufficient to meet the needs of pupils. For example, in music there are too few instruments. The school does not have a library.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and the governing body through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors, senior and middle leaders (where appropriate) and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work, to listen to them read and to gain their views about various aspects of their school
- meet groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives from the school council and eco-committee
- visit a broad sample of classes, including learning support groups and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning and to see staff teaching in a range of settings, including classrooms, support groups and in outdoor areas
- where appropriate, visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs, where appropriate
- attend assemblies and daily acts of collective worship
- look closely at the school's self-evaluation processes
- consider the school's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the school has taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of school documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the governing body, information on pupils' wellbeing, including the safeguarding of pupils, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

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Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

Estyn evaluates a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

Excellent	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
Good	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
Adequate and needs improvement	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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A report on

**Cwm Primary School
Canning Street
Cwm
Ebbw Vale
Blaenau Gwent
NP23 7RD**

Date of inspection: December 2019

by

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education
and Training in Wales**

About Cwm Primary School

Cwm Primary School is in the village of Cwm in Blaenau Gwent local authority. There are 211 pupils on roll, aged from 3 to 11 years, including 22 nursery pupils. There are nine classes, including the nursery class.

Over the past three years, around 24% of pupils are eligible to free school meals. This figure is above the Welsh average of 18%.

The school identifies about 16% of pupils as having special educational needs. This is below the average for primary schools in Wales (21%). Very few pupils have a statement of special educational needs.

Very few pupils have English as an additional language. There are no pupils who speak Welsh at home.

The headteacher took up post in May 2011. The school's last inspection was in October 2012.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website at the link below.
http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk/Schools/SchoolSearch?lang=en

Summary

Cwm Primary School plays a key role at the heart of its community. Staff place great importance on the happiness of pupils and recognise that all pupils need to feel safe, secure and valued in order to be able to learn and make progress. As a result, standards of wellbeing in the school are very high.

Teachers and teaching assistants deliver learning activities that engage pupils and encourage them to want to learn. They integrate aspects of Welsh culture and local history well. Staff use the Welsh language frequently and encourage its use among pupils effectively. As a result, standards in Welsh are a particular strength.

The headteacher sets a clear vision for the school based around pupil wellbeing. She works with other leaders, teachers and teaching assistant in a series of teams that encourage all to develop their leadership skills and contribute to school improvement. The school works well with other providers to improve the quality of its provision and share its strengths.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	**Good**
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	**Good**
Teaching and learning experiences	**Good**
Care, support and guidance	**Good**
Leadership and management	**Good**

Recommendations

R1 Ensure that pupils in the foundation phase have meaningful opportunities to develop as independent learners

R2 Ensure that teachers match activities to the needs of pupils of all abilities, particularly the least able

R3 Improve the quality of presentation, spelling and punctuation in key stage 2

What happens next

The school will draw up an action plan to address the recommendations from the inspection.

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study on its work in relation to intergenerational community work, for dissemination on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Standards: Good

Around half of pupils begin school with literacy, numeracy and social skills below those expected for their age. Nearly all pupils make good progress in these skills over time and a minority make better than expected progress. The development of pupils' personal and social skills is a particular strength. Most pupils with special educational needs and those eligible for free school meals make good progress over time.

Most pupils in the foundation phase develop effective listening skills. For example, reception pupils listen carefully to the class teacher's instructions before beginning their carousel of activities. Many pupils speak with confidence to other pupils and when contributing to class discussions. Most build well on these skills in key stage 2, and, by Year 6, many pupils speak with developing clarity to staff and visitors.

Most pupils develop an effective knowledge of letter sounds at an early stage. This helps them to make quick progress with their reading skills. By Year 2, they read basic texts fluently and with understanding, paying good attention to punctuation. For example, they recognise speech marks and add expression to their voice when reading what a character says. By Year 6, most pupils express preferences around favourite authors, use the blurb to help them choose a book and understand the features of different types of fiction and non-fiction texts. A few are beginning to develop higher order reading skills and use inference and deduction to predict what may happen next in a story.

In the foundation phase, many pupils develop effective writing skills. They develop quickly the ability to write neat, well-formed letters and use their phonic knowledge well to construct simple words. By Year 1, they write informative short passages, such as when explaining how they carried out an experiment about the properties of different materials. In key stage 2, most pupils continue to improve their knowledge of a good range of fiction and non-fiction forms of writing. For example, pupils in Year 5 create imaginative leaflets to advertise a dinosaur theme park using engaging language, such as, 'immerse yourself in this amazing VR room!' However, in too many cases in key stage 2, the quality of handwriting and presentation is inconsistent and pupils make basic errors in spelling and punctuation. This sometimes distracts from the overall good quality of the content of their writing.

In the foundation phase most pupils develop a good range of mathematical skills. For example, in Year 2 they use their ability to count to 100 to measure swords in centimetres as part of their castle project. They have good recall of number bonds to 10 and transfer these into counting in 10s to 100. They double and halve numbers to 20 confidently and understand simple fractions, such as halves and quarters. Most pupils in key stage 2 use their numeracy skills successfully. They handle data accurately and present it in various forms purposefully. For example, they use line graphs correctly to identify the most effective insulating material to keep tea warm. Older pupils use their understanding of money and the four rules of number successfully to work out the best option to buy group readers for their class.

Most pupils make very strong progress in developing their Welsh oracy skills within Welsh lessons and through class routines. Many are eager to practise these with visitors and around the school. By Year 2, many use suitable phrases regularly in everyday situations. For example, they recall the days of the week and describe the weather for the day. Many read simple texts with understanding and write a sequence of sentences correctly, such as to describe themselves. In key stage 2, many pupils ask questions and respond appropriately when discussing favourite activities and their families, with teachers, each other and visitors. Many pupils' reading and writing skills in Welsh are developing appropriately. Older pupils state that they enjoy speaking Welsh and they believe it is important to be bilingual.

Most pupils develop effective information and communication technology (ICT) skills. In foundation phase, pupils use programmable toys, tablets and interactive whiteboards well. For example, reception pupils write simple instructions to guide a toy robot around a model town. Most pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 use databases and spreadsheets skilfully to create and find records and calculate totals using basic formulae. For example, Year 6 pupils collaborate to create a database on countries of the world. Older pupils' keyboard skills are strong, for example they use keyboard short cuts to carry out actions to edit work. They log in successfully, access and save work to a variety of online platforms, including Hwb. Many also access these at home or in the local library.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Most pupils behave well in class and when moving around the school. They listen carefully in assemblies and show respect to each other. They are aware of their rights, and the responsibilities they have towards the rights of other children in their school. For example, each class has created a class charter, using articles in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Most pupils speak politely and confidently to adults and are keen to share their learning and information about the school. They benefit from strong relationships with their teachers, other adults in the school and the wider community. For example, many pupils participate enthusiastically in the community walking project and other inter-generational activities.

Nearly all pupils engage well and settle quickly on arrival into class and are ready to learn. Many pupils work effectively in a group to discuss ideas and create questions. For example, Year 6 pupils discuss successfully why humans might need to establish a human colony on Mars, and then ask purposeful questions to expand their thinking. However, a minority of pupils do not persevere to produce work of a high quality, they have limited independent skills and do not reflect purposefully on how to improve their work.

Nearly all pupils understand the important of exercise. They enjoy taking part in engaging daily fitness activities, focusing on both physical and emotional wellbeing. Sport's ambassadors from key stage 2 organise valuable fitness activities for younger pupils at lunchtimes. Many pupils represent the school successfully in sporting competitions. Nearly all pupils know how to make healthy choices about what they eat. For example, the Year 6 fruit tuck shop is well-attended at playtimes.

Most pupils like school and feel safe, secure and well cared for. They know they can talk to an adult each playtime by going to the highly effective 'have a chat' session, and can also attend the weekly 'happy café'. Pupils with specific social and emotional needs make very good progress against their targets, as a result of effective interventions. Most pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe online. For example, they understand how to protect a password and the information they should not share with someone on the internet.

Most pupils are keen to take on worthwhile leadership roles within the school. Many pupil leadership groups have been effective in making decisions to improve the school. For example, the eco-council promotes sustainability effectively across the school. They organise a uniform shop to encourage the reuse of school uniform items and also arrange litter picks. Pupils in other groups contribute to school life by, for example, improving the environment of the school with the new bike racks and shelter.

Nearly all pupils value highly the school's place and impact on the local community. The head boy and head girl represent the school at community remembrance services and Christmas celebrations. The highly regarded choir sings at local events to fundraise for charity. Pupils have recently made parcels to help homeless people.

Many pupils have a good understanding of the ways in which humans can impact positively and negatively on the environment. For example, Year 6's 'drowning in plastic' project involved a wide range of skills and activities to learn about the impact of plastic on the oceans.

Pupils' attendance is very good and most pupils are punctual. Attendance levels compare well to those in other similar schools.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

Staff have very good working relationships with pupils and employ effective behaviour management strategies that ensure a positive and purposeful learning environment. Teaching has a positive effect on many pupils' standards. In most classes, teachers ask questions frequently and skilfully to develop pupils' responses and ideas further. In the best cases, they use questioning well to share good work and ensure that pupils know how to be successful in their activities. However in the foundation phase, although the content of lessons engages many pupils' interest appropriately, teachers and teaching assistants tend to over-direct pupil activities. This limits the development of wider skills such as resilience and independence.

The thematic approach to planning stimulates nearly all pupils' interest and encourages their engagement in learning. Through class discussion at the beginning of a new topic, pupils have appropriate opportunities to make choices about what they would like to learn. For example, pupils in lower key stage 2 chose a topic on food and wanted to investigate pizzas. This culminated in a trip to a pizza restaurant. Teachers arrange worthwhile trips to reinforce class topics. In the foundation phase, teachers ensure that the indoor learning areas meet pupils' requirements appropriately. The use of outdoor areas is developing satisfactorily, for example, pupils engage enthusiastically in building a castle as part of their role play. However, in too many cases across the school, activities do not challenge pupils to achieve at the level of which they are capable.

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Teachers ensure good opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across the curriculum. For instance, in the foundation phase pupils write their addresses when labelling parcels for the 'Jolly Christmas Postman'. They use a map of the street in Cwm to direct a programmable toy to different destination and landmarks. In Year 3, pupils use their numeracy skills successfully to compare the prices of fair trade and non-fair trade goods.

The school ensures that assessments are valid and accurate through regular validation meetings internally and with teachers from other schools. Teachers' feedback often helps pupils to know how well they are doing and what they need to do in order to improve. However, this is not consistent and in too many cases feedback does not indicate to pupils what they need to do next or provide sufficient opportunities for them to make improvements.

The provision to develop pupils' Welsh language skills across the school is a notable strength. Nearly all members of staff use Welsh commands and phrases effectively and lessons link well to pupils' everyday lives, such as their families and homes. The school has a range of colourful displays to encourage the use of Welsh outside the classroom and the 'Criw Cymraeg' conduct a weekly assembly where everyone recites the Welsh school prayer. The use of visitors and visits enrich pupils' learning well, such as through visits to museums and local important landmarks. The school celebrates the culture and heritage of Wales well, for example through studying the effect of the World War One on Cwm and the number of soldiers who lost their lives. Local artists visit the school and work with pupils to produce interesting portraits using food paint.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Cwm Primary School is a caring and nurturing school. Its ethos ensures very strong relationships between staff and pupils and places the school at the heart of the community.

The school provides well for pupils with special educational needs. Experienced and knowledgeable teaching assistants lead effective interventions to develop the literacy and numeracy skills of targeted pupils. For example, an oracy support programme is successful in developing pupils' listening skills and improves their ability to share ideas through the use of a range of sentence structures and tenses. Staff have developed a simple and effective method to summarise pupils on a single page. This provides staff with clarity over each pupils' individual interests and needs. The special needs coordinator and teachers work together to create beneficial individual education plans with relevant targets for pupils in need of additional support. However, outside of additional support sessions, teachers do not always sufficiently consider these targets or ensure that tasks are suitable for pupils of all abilities when planning lessons and activities.

The school provides highly effective support to pupils with emotional and social difficulties through careful assessment and targeted interventions. Nearly all staff are aware of these pupils' needs and how to meet them. Recent staff professional learning on coping with adverse childhood experiences and attachment issues has further helped teachers and teaching assistants to understand and support these pupils.

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The school has suitable processes to assess and track the progress of individuals and groups of pupils. The school tracks and monitors attendance very effectively and addresses any issues of poor attendance actively.

The school has established very good working relationships with the parents and they value the school's caring and supportive ethos. The school keeps parents well informed about how their child is progressing, through reports and parents' evenings. The school runs beneficial workshops to enable parents to develop their understanding of how pupils learn, for example by explaining how teachers teach multiplication and division. This is effective in helping parents to support their child with their work at home. The school communicates important information about the life of the school effectively through social media.

The school promotes healthy eating and drinking very well and helps pupils to understand the benefits of healthy choices. It sets very high expectations for behaviour and works successfully with partners to address issues when they arise. For example, the Police Liaison Officer supported the school effectively to help pupils understand the need to treat everyone equally. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Pupils benefit from the school's comprehensive range of extra-curricular clubs and activities. The school plans successfully for pupils to take on a growing range of responsibilities as they mature. For example, digital leaders organise ICT equipment and help other learners with their ICT skills in class.

The school plays an important role at the centre of its community. Links with local organisations enable pupils to develop their self-confidence to perform or speak in front of different audiences and with a variety of people. For example, the successful school choir sings regularly in community events and with other choirs. The school's work to extend its wellbeing initiatives into the local community is a particular strength. For instance, its 'intergenerational walking project' helps develop pupils' awareness of their role in supporting the needs of others in the local community

The school's personal and social education programme ensures that pupils develop a sound understanding of how people change as they mature and the importance of considering the views and beliefs of others. Assemblies and religious education lessons develop pupils' sense of spiritual awareness and knowledge of cultures around the globe. For example, pupils in key stage 2, compare the features of major world religions such as Sikhism, Judaism and Christianity. The school integrates pupils' understanding of the wider world into class topics appropriately. For example, the 'around the world' topic in key stage 2 has allowed pupils to investigate a range of arts, facts and traditions from chosen countries.

Leadership and management: Good

The headteacher has developed a clear vision for the school that places pupils' wellbeing at the heart of its work. She recognises that pupils need to feel safe, happy and secure to be able to learn. She shares this vision very effectively with staff, pupils, governors and parents, who work collaboratively to create a positive learning environment where pupils feel valued and cared for.

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Leaders and staff have high expectations of themselves and others. They have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and discharge these well. A particular strength of leadership is the sense of team working and collaboration that underpins the school's work. The organisation of staff into four curriculum teams is effective in ensuring that teachers and teaching assistants have good quality opportunities to develop their leadership skills. They create and implement action plans for their curriculum areas, monitoring their effectiveness and reporting on progress. Staff are keen to take on leadership roles. For example, teaching assistants with responsibility for implementing a nurture intervention programme have taken the initiative in developing tracking systems that allow them to monitor the progress of the pupils they work with.

The governing body is developing its role effectively. They gather first-hand information about the quality of provision and its impact on pupil outcomes through looking at pupils' work using crib sheets produced by staff and by undertaking visits to lessons. This provides them with the information they need to provide effective challenge and support to the work of the school.

The school is developing well as a learning community. Staff are keen to learn from each other and colleagues in other schools. For example, visits to another primary school led to the implementation of 'independent zones' across the school. These are beginning to improve the opportunities for pupils to practise the skills they learn in maths and literacy lessons independently. Teachers have begun to use research information well to help reflect and improve their practice. For example, in the foundation phase, a teacher videoed pupils to provide a baseline record of their oracy skills before trialling a new approach to improve their vocabulary. She then used the video to measure the progress the pupils had made over time and to judge whether the intervention had been successful. The school shares aspects of its work successfully with other providers by hosting visits and through staff presenting at conferences. This is particularly the case for its strong work on ensuring high levels of pupil wellbeing.

The school has a strong track record of improvement in many areas. In most cases, their self-evaluation procedures identify relevant areas for improvement and leaders plan effective actions to address these. For example, staff identified successfully the need to improve pupils' ICT skills. Similarly, they recognise the need to improve pupils' resilience in their learning. The school's actions to improve standards of pupils' Welsh have been particularly effective. However, in a very few cases, the school does not identify important areas for improvement, such as the quality of foundation phase provision or ensuring that teaching meets the needs of pupils of all abilities.

Senior leaders work well with the governing body to oversee financial and other resources. They link spending closely to the school's improvement priorities and regularly evaluate whether expenditure is cost effective by reviewing their action plans. The school has sufficient teachers and support staff to deliver the curriculum and meet the needs of pupils. It is well resourced, with plentiful books, ICT hardware and other equipment. Leaders plan well for the use of grant funding, including the pupil development grant, which they target effectively to support vulnerable learners.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and the governing body through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors, senior and middle leaders (where appropriate) and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work, to listen to them read and to gain their views about various aspects of their school
- meet groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives from the school council and eco-committee
- visit a broad sample of classes, including learning support groups and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning and to see staff teaching in a range of settings, including classrooms, support groups and in outdoor areas
- where appropriate, visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs, where appropriate
- attend assemblies and daily acts of collective worship
- look closely at the school's self-evaluation processes
- consider the school's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the school has taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of school documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the governing body, information on pupils' wellbeing, including the safeguarding of pupils, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

Estyn evaluates a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

Excellent	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
Good	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
Adequate and needs improvement	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

Ysgol Bro Helyg
Rising Sun Industrial Estate
Blaina
Blaenau Gwent
NP13 3DQ

Date of inspection: February 2020

by

Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

About Ysgol Bro Helyg

Ysgol Bro Helyg is situated near the village of Blaina in Blaenau Gwent local authority. The school serves a wide area and pupils come from all corners of the county. There are 256 pupils between 3 and 11 years old on roll, including 47 nursery age pupils. Welsh is the main medium of the school's life and work.

Around 7% of pupils are eligible for free schools meals. This is significantly lower than the national average of 18%. The school has identified that around 11% of pupils have special educational needs. This is lower than the national figure of 21%. Many pupils come from English-speaking homes. Around 21% come from Welsh-speaking homes.

The current headteacher was appointed in April 2012 and the last inspection was conducted in March 2015.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website at the link below.
http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk/Schools/SchoolSearch?lang=en

Summary

The school is a caring and hard-working community which provides a firm foundation for pupils' learning from an early age, particularly in acquiring the Welsh language. The headteacher and staff have high expectations of pupils and, as a result, most make good progress during their time at the school. Staff organise purposeful interventions for pupils, which succeed in supporting them to improve their literacy and numeracy skills, and wellbeing, well.

Across the school, most pupils show enthusiasm towards their learning. They respect others well and work diligently in pairs and groups. Classes are organised and industrious places in which most pupils persevere well with their tasks. However, not all pupils in the foundation phase are given enough opportunities to enable them to make their own decisions and become independent learners. Staff plan valuable opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy and numeracy skills consistently in their work. However, they do not plan purposefully enough to develop pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills.

The headteacher has a clear vision to realise the aim of 'setting a firm foundation for a bright future'. The school has established a hard-working management team that has succeeded in leading significant improvements successfully over time. However, processes for self-evaluation and planning for improvement do not always focus enough on the most important priorities in order to move the school forward.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	**Good**
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	**Good**
Teaching and learning experiences	**Adequate and needs improvement**
Care, support and guidance	**Good**
Leadership and management	**Good**

Recommendations

R1 Ensure that teaching and learning experiences develop the independence of all pupils in the foundation phase consistently

R2 Improve provision to develop pupils' ICT skills across the school

R3 Strengthen self-evaluation and planning for improvement procedures in order to prioritise and address the most important areas

What happens next

The school will produce an action plan to address the recommendations from the inspection.

Main findings

Standards: Good

On entry to the school, many pupils have communication skills that are below the standard expected for their age. Very few are able to speak Welsh before entry. However, most pupils, including those with special educational needs, make sound progress during their time at the school.

Many pupils begin to acquire Welsh oracy skills very quickly after starting at the school. They come to know instructions and begin to speak Welsh by using appropriate vocabulary and simple sentences. By the end of the foundation phase, most pupils speak Welsh confidently with visitors, and respond appropriately to staff's questions. Most pupils develop their oracy skills further during their time in key stage 2 and begin to give purposeful consideration to the audience, for example when providing voiceovers for their animation work, 'Antur India'. Nearly all pupils listen attentively to adults in lessons.

Most pupils make strong progress in their reading skills. By the end of the foundation phase, they read well with a good level of fluency and use different strategies to break down unfamiliar words. Most show a thorough understanding of content and succeed in translating sentences from Welsh books to English. Many pupils in key stage 2 develop successful reading skills, and a majority read for pleasure and discuss their favourite authors confidently. They use their reading skills skilfully to analyse and find information, for example when solving a series of mathematical problems.

During their time in the foundation phase, most pupils develop sound writing skills. Many of the youngest pupils develop robust fine motor skills by making marks and begin to write letters and simple words. By the end of the foundation phase, most develop to write extended pieces successfully, such as a letter to a 'snowman'. During key stage 2, most write purposefully in a variety of different genres. For example, they write an article for an imaginary newspaper, 'Clecs y Cwm', and write a portrayal of King Richard III as part of a project about William Shakespeare.

Many pupils in the nursery classes are beginning to recognise numbers and count to ten correctly. They come to recognise and create patterns successfully, for example when printing shapes by using potatoes. By the end of the foundation phase, most pupils use number confidently in their work. For example, they find the correct change when paying for different 'fruits' with pretend money in the role-play area. Most pupils continue to apply their numeracy skills productively during key stage 2, for example as they record the results of a scientific investigation to discover the average distance of the flight of a paper aeroplane.

Most pupils develop a limited range of information and communication technology (ICT) skills appropriately. For example, Year 2 pupils use digital art packages to draw pictures of Celtic roundhouses and add a purposeful sentence to them, while Year 6 pupils find information on the internet confidently. However, many pupils' ICT skills have not developed soundly enough.

Most pupils develop creative skills skilfully. For example, individuals in the foundation phase learn about the different cultures of the world by creating Chinese lanterns and Rangoli patterns, while Year 6 pupils perform Shakespeare's plays in a local theatre.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

The working relationship between pupils and staff at the school is sound and provides an effective foundation to maintain a caring and supportive ethos. Nearly all pupils talk about their school with pride.

Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They share their ideas about their education appropriately by providing ideas about what they would like to learn at the beginning of each theme. They concentrate well and persevere for extended periods. They are very willing to discuss their work, their successes and the next steps in their learning with adults. A good example of this is their pride when talking about their work on managing funds. They work together effectively, either in groups, pairs or by supporting each other, when necessary.

Pupils have a high level of trust in staff and know that they will do their best for them. As a result, nearly all pupils enjoy school, understand what to do if anything is worrying them, and feel completely safe there. They speak confidently about how to stay safe online. Pupils are able to discuss confidently the importance of not revealing information online and keeping their contact details confidential.

Most pupils understand the importance of eating and drinking healthily and make healthy choices. The mile-a-day running activity has a positive effect on pupils' attitudes to physical exercise and a healthy lifestyle. Many pupils take advantage of opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities, such as sports and art clubs.

Pupils play a leading role in the school's strategic work. Members of the wide range of children's committees have a purposeful influence on different aspects of the school. Pupils understand their responsibilities clearly, and discharge their duties enthusiastically and maturely. A good example of this is the Criw Cymraeg and their work to promote the use of the Welsh language within businesses in the local community. The school council organises fundraising activities for a large number of charities. A significant amount of money was raised recently for a children's charity. This has a positive effect on most pupils' awareness of the needs of others within their community and the wider world.

Most pupils develop well are moral and knowledgeable citizens through their increasing awareness of values that are promoted by the school.

Teaching and learning experiences: Adequate and needs improvement

Staff have a positive and supportive working relationship with pupils. Teachers know the pupils and their needs well and, as a result, most make appropriate progress in lessons. Teachers have high expectations of pupils. Most lessons have a purposeful pace, which contributes effectively to the hard-working environment that is evident in the classrooms. Teachers plan regular opportunities for pupils to learn in groups and pairs and, as a result, most respect their peers' contribution to their learning.

All staff contribute successfully towards creating a Welsh ethos in the school. They model the language skilfully and take appropriate advantage of opportunities to enrich pupils' vocabulary. As a result, most pupils make sound progress in learning the language from a very early age. Staff ensure that pupils make full use of the Welsh language in lessons and outside the classroom. As a result, by key stage 2, they talk to each other naturally through the medium of Welsh during lessons. Teachers use off-site visits effectively to deepen pupils' understanding of their themes, for example by taking part in science and technology workshops at the university. However, teachers do not always take advantage of opportunities to weave Welsh culture and history into work across the curriculum.

Teachers plan an appropriate range of interesting activities that engage pupils' interest. They have good subject knowledge and give due attention to pupils' previous learning when planning new experiences. Teachers work purposefully with assistants, who support teaching effectively. They question pupils' skilfully during lessons, which contributes beneficially towards developing their thinking skills. This also helps them to move to the next step in their learning, and is a useful means of assessing their progress. Teachers give pupils purposeful and regular feedback during their lessons, including opportunities for them to reflect on their own progress and that of their peers. As a result, in the best practice, pupils refine, correct and improve the content of their work appropriately. Teachers set useful personal targets for pupils and arrange for them to have time to practise them regularly.

Overall, foundation phase staff plan a suitable range of learning experiences that respond appropriately to pupils' requirements. Teachers prepare suitable focus activities in order to present new concepts to pupils. In addition, there is a range of interesting challenges in the different areas in the classrooms, which provide valuable opportunities for pupils to apply their skills appropriately. However, pupils are not given enough opportunities to make choices about their learning nor to conduct research and find information for themselves. There are also very few opportunities for pupils to take part in beneficial learning experiences in the outdoor area and develop their independent learning skills in full.

Teachers plan valuable opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy and numeracy skills in lessons across the school. They apply these skills in various areas across the curriculum. For example, key stage 2 pupils have recently analysed data on the Welsh rugby team. However, teachers do not plan purposefully enough to ensure that pupils build on their ICT skills during their time at the school.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school is a caring and inclusive community that provides high quality care and support for nearly all pupils. All staff are committed to identifying pupils' needs at an early stage and providing them with valuable support. They use robust systems successfully to track their progress from their starting points. As a result, they provide them with purposeful interventions by using a wide range of programmes in order to improve their literacy and numeracy skills, and wellbeing, where appropriate. Purposeful planning between teachers and assistants ensures that all understand their roles to enable them to meet pupils' needs robustly.

The special educational needs co-ordinator works successfully with parents in order to seek their views as they plan support for their children, and report to them on their progress. Individual plans for pupils with special educational needs are purposeful and enable them to make good progress against their targets.

Staff work effectively with a full range of partners and external agencies to support provision for pupils with special educational needs or emotional needs. This contributes well to the school's caring and familial ethos.

The school develops the pupil's voice well through a number of school councils and committees. This has a positive effect on the school's ethos, as pupils feel that they are respected and that staff listen to their ideas. These opportunities promote principles such as co-operation, courtesy and friendship effectively and naturally.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern. External partners, such as the police, are used effectively to ensure that pupils understand how to stay safe online and the importance of not abusing substances.

The school promotes pupils' health and wellbeing effectively and has appropriate arrangements to promote eating and drinking healthily. A full range of beneficial activities, such as extra-curricular cooking, netball and football clubs, and skipping during break times, support this well. As a result, most pupils understand the importance of keeping healthy.

There is a robust relationship between the school and parents. Staff promote an open and co-operative culture, which succeeds in ensuring their commitment and comprehensive support. Successful arrangements include implementing a transition programme when pupils start at the school, which helps them to settle quickly. This programme also provides valuable support for parents to develop their knowledge of making healthy food at home, in addition to developing their initial knowledge of the Welsh language.

There are good opportunities for pupils to develop their awareness and knowledge of different cultures and other parts of the world by learning about special celebrations. A good example of this is the work on the Chinese New Year, and the differences and similarities between some of the world's religions. This ensures that pupils show empathy towards the lives of others and are given suitable opportunities to develop spiritually by reflecting on their own beliefs. The school promotes pupils' moral development successfully. It places a clear emphasis on aspects such as the importance of treating others with respect and promotes children's rights. The school has a supportive and effective programme to support young carers. It has successful links with people who are living with dementia, and beneficial opportunities are provided for pupils to support charities such as the local Cancer Centre.

Provision to develop pupils' understanding of sustainability is good. As a result of the work of the eco council, teachers and pupils promote the importance of looking after our planet effectively. For example, they recycle paper and develop ways of saving energy to foster the whole community's understanding of the importance of living a greener lifestyle.

Leadership and management: Good

The headteacher and leaders have a clear and robust vision to develop the school as a successful learning community by providing high quality education and care for all pupils. This vision is based soundly on raising standards, developing pride towards the Welsh language, and pupils' wellbeing. The headteacher has established an effective leadership team to support the work of setting a decisive strategic direction for all of the school's work. They share this successfully with staff, governors, parents and pupils. Members of the senior management team have high expectations of themselves and others. They use their expertise skilfully to ensure support and encouragement for staff to commit themselves fully to improving pupils' outcomes. Nearly all members of staff are very aware of their roles and responsibilities, and operate highly effectively as a team. All of this has had a positive effect on raising standards, and has ensured clear improvements across the school over the last five years.

The school has robust procedure to manage the performance of its teachers and assistants. This ensures that they are given support to fulfil the school's priorities and their individual professional needs. A strong feature of the school's work is the way in which leaders support and encourage staff to undertake professional learning activities successfully within the school and through a range of beneficial networks with schools across the region. A good example of this is the guidance that the school provides to schools in the cluster on professional learning. This enables all staff to reflect on their practice and develop leaders' confidence. The headteacher also supports staff to take part in further training activities to prepare them for the next step in their careers. Most learning assistants are trained effectively to support individual pupils and specific groups of pupils with a variety of useful interventions. This contributes successfully towards strengthening staff's skills, in order to ensure that pupils' standards are good in terms of their learning and wellbeing.

The governors are supportive of the school and have a good understanding of pupils' standards and achievement. They receive purposeful information from the headteacher, and valuable and regular presentations from staff on particular elements of the school's life and work. Members of the governing body conduct valuable learning walks with pupils, staff and the challenge adviser in order to seek more information about provision. This develops their understanding of the school's work successfully and enables them to challenge leaders appropriately.

Leaders have established a strong culture of continuous self-evaluation, which focuses appropriately on pupils' outcomes and wellbeing, in addition to provision. Leaders make suitable use of the views and input of parents, pupils and staff as part of the school's self-evaluation procedures. Leaders and teachers follow a comprehensive monitoring programme in order to evaluate the quality of provision and learning. However, these evaluations are not always incisive enough to identify some areas for improvement effectively enough. Overall, there is an appropriate link between the findings of self-evaluation procedures and the priorities in the school development plan. The development plan is a comprehensive document, which outlines suitable actions to ensure improvement. However, priorities are very wide-ranging and include a number of areas for improvement. As a result, leaders do not always prioritise the most important areas that are in need of attention.

Leaders manage the budget carefully and ensure that expenditure links well with plans for improvement. The school makes skilful use of different grants, including the pupil development grant, to support vulnerable pupils. This has a positive effect on the literacy and numeracy skills, and wellbeing, of these pupils.

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Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and the governing body through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors, senior and middle leaders and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work, to listen to them read and to gain their views about various aspects of their school
- meet groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives from the school council and eco-committee
- visit a broad sample of classes, including learning support groups and the specialist resource base (where appropriate), and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning and to see staff teaching in a range of settings, including classrooms, support groups (where appropriate) and in outdoor areas
- visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning (where appropriate)
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs, where appropriate
- attend assemblies and daily acts of collective worship
- look closely at the school's self-evaluation processes
- consider the school's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the school has taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of school documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the governing body, information on pupils' wellbeing, including the safeguarding of pupils, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

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Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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This document has been translated by Trosol (Welsh to English).

Agenda Item 9

Executive and Council Only
Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A
Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: N/A

Committee: **Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **3rd November 2020**

Report Subject: **Outcome of the Leisure Review and Performance Monitoring for the Aneurin Leisure Trust**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor Joanne Collins, Executive Member for Education**

Report Submitted by: **Lynn Phillips, Interim Corporate Director of Education**

Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
√	√	19.10.20			03.11.20	09.12.20		

1. **Purpose of the Report**
1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Members with an update on the outcome of the Leisure Trust Review, to clarify that the client function is now aligned within the Education Portfolio and is also an opportunity to scrutinise the future performance monitoring arrangements of the Aneurin Leisure Trust.

2. **Scope and Background**
2.1 In April 2018, the Council commenced a review of the provision of Leisure and Culture Services. This review was in line with the finance and management agreement between the Council and the Aneurin Leisure Trust (ALT). The review included two phases and the second phase of the review concluded early 2020.

2.2 In parallel to the review, the Council developed the Leisure and Culture Strategy 2019-29 (Appendix 1) to provide strategic direction for the future of leisure services and identified key priorities for the next 10 years.

2.3 Due to the emergence of COVID-19 and subsequent national lockdown, the outcome of the review was not presented to Full Council until August 2020. However, at that meeting, Option 2 was agreed which stated:

'Provide a time limited contract extension period of five years with a break/review point at year 3. Using the proposed new governance structure to formally review the performance of ALT's delivery of the business plan against the new specification and revised financial and management arrangement. Use clear checkpoints to identify risks and take action to mitigate those in a timely manner. If ALT fully deliver to their business plan the Council will consider a further extension to the contract subject to a further review'.

2.4 In addition, along with the appointment of the Interim Director of Education, it was agreed in April 2020 to move the lead responsibility for Leisure and Culture from the Regeneration and Environment Directorate to the Education

Directorate, undertaking the role of client for these services, and appointing an interim lead officer for this function.

2.5   Since April, the following areas have been prioritised:

- Establishing regular meetings and protocols between the Education link officer and senior managers in the ALT;
- Supporting the Trust through lockdown, phased reopening and understanding any financial impact;
- Identifying areas for development following the review, including the service specification, governance structure, Service Level Agreements, reporting framework; and,
- Handover from previous link officer including the Met Community Asset Transfer, Head 4 Arts etc.

2.6   **Response to COVID-19**

Throughout lockdown, many of the Trust's employees were initially redeployed to support the Council's response to the pandemic, including the community hubs and later providing summer activities for vulnerable children. However, the Trust also placed the majority of the workforce onto the Job Retention Scheme (furlough) in order to safeguard the business. A robust phased reopening plan was developed and gradually many of the Trust's services have moved to partial or full re-opening, working closely with Health and Safety colleagues to put the appropriate risk assessments in place.

2.7   The review recognised that key to the successful delivery of a sustainable Leisure and Culture offer is improved governance and contract management arrangements. Therefore, since April, developments have focussed on finalising the draft service specification which outlines exactly what services are being requested. The specification includes:

i.   Core services required including Sport and Leisure Centres; Sports and Physical Activity Development; Outdoor Activity Centres; Destination Venues; Libraries; and Adult Learning.
ii. Strategic Outcome Performance Indicators (SOPIs)
iii. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
iv. Service Level Agreements (Appendix 2)
v.   A new governance structure which includes Terms of Reference (Appendix 3) for a new Joint Strategic Partnership Group, which will meet twice a year with representation from the most senior representatives from the Local Authority and the Trust.
vi. Performance management and monitoring processes

2.8   **Monitoring and Scrutinising Performance**
In order to monitor and scrutinise the progress and impact of the Trust, the intention is for a full progress report to be presented to the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee twice a year, reporting against the agreed KPIs within the specification. The performance indicators are outlined in section 6.1. Other reports may be presented throughout the year by exception.

These reports will also be presented to the Executive Committee and the Joint Strategic Partnership Group for comment.

2.9 The working relationship between the Council and Aneurin Leisure Trust has greatly improved during phase 2 of the review. This positive working relationship has continued to improve throughout lockdown and into the re-opening phase. This has been enhanced through establishing weekly structured meetings between the link officer and senior managers in the Trust.

3. **Options for Recommendation**
3.1 This report has been discussed and agreed by Education DMT and CLT prior to submission to Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee. Members are asked to consider the following options:

3.2 **Option 1:** Members are requested to accept the report's update and proposals for future reporting arrangements.

3.3 **Option 2:** Members are requested to scrutinise the information detailed within the report and make appropriate recommendations to the Executive Committee for final approval.

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

4.1 **Corporate Plan Priorities**
This report supports the Council's Performance Management Framework and the work of the Aneurin Leisure Trust contributes to the Council Priority, Strong and Environmentally Smart Communities, the delivery of statutory responsibilities for providing library services and the core elements of the Blaenau Gwent Wellbeing plan.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 **Impact on Budget**
This proposal in this report will ensure that the Council are getting the most out of the investment through the commissioned service. The proposed new reporting process will ensure that the investment is delivering the outcomes as articulated in the Leisure and Culture Strategy. The full impact of COVID-19 on the Trust's Business Plan is not yet fully realised, as the furlough scheme has provided much needed financial support. However, the Trust has a clear delivery plan and financial forecast which takes account of this uncertainty, and is being closely monitored

5.2 **Risk**
The risk of not monitoring progress against the agreed performance indicators could lead to the outcomes in the Leisure and Culture Strategy not being met, and the Trust not meeting the requirements set out in the service specification.

5.3 **Legal**
Monitoring performance in line with the agreed performance indicators is a requirement within the Service Specification, which is part of the Finance and Management Agreement. The Finance and Management Agreement represents all the legal and financial arrangements for the relationship between the Council and ALT.

5.4 **Human Resources**
There are no direct Human Resources implications associated with this report other than the allocation of time from the link officer.

6. **Supporting Evidence**
N/A

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

The bi-annual reports will report progress against the following performance indicators. The 4 Strategic Outcome Performance Indicators are as follows:

1. Increasing Participation for All
2. Improving health and wellbeing, and reducing health inequalities
3. Providing Local Economic and Social Benefit building upon the leisure and culture offer
4. Developing effective collaboration with partners

The 7 Key Performance Indicators which will be used to monitor progress are based on the information below. Targets and/or actions are being set against each of these areas to provide clarity on what is expected for the Trust and also to ensure Members can make judgements on what is going well and what needs to improve:

1. Governance, Leadership and Advocacy
   The operator is focussed on the key priorities and ensuring the Council, and strategic partners collaborate effectively to meet strategic outcomes.

2. Financial Sustainability
   The operator has sound finances and is it able to provide the services to meet residents needs now and in the future. This will form part of the financial monitoring arrangements.

3. Use of the Services
   Residents are accessing the services to support behavioural change.

4. Operational Performance
   The service operations provided by the operator are efficient and effective.

5. Customer & Staff Satisfaction

To what extent are our customers/staff satisfied with the service / organisation?

6. Library Services Standards

To what extent do our library services comply with Welsh Public Library Standards?

7. Environmental Sustainability

The operator will reduce the environmental impact of its people, activities and operations to meet the Council's carbon reduction target.

6.2 **Expected outcome for the public** (**This section is mandatory**)
The expected outcome for the public will be to achieve the aspirations in the Leisure and Culture Strategy

6.3 **Involvement**
The updating of the service specification and performance indicators has been developed in collaboration between the Council and the Trust.

6.4 **Thinking for the Long term**
Blaenau Gwent's decision to commission the provision of Leisure and Culture Services from ALT is intended to secure the long term provision of Leisure and Culture provision in the County Borough. The monitoring and reporting process, in line with the finance and management agreement, seeks to strengthen the long term provision by ensuring that provision is in line with what is required.

6.5 **Preventative focus**
The impact of leisure and cultural provision on wellbeing has been recognised for a long time and is preventative in its approach.

6.6 **Collaboration / partnership working**
The new governance model within the service specification ensures that collaboration is at the heart of all decisions. The Joint Strategic Partnership Group will strengthen this approach and encourage greater partnership working.

6.7 **Integration**
The move of the client function to Education will only further enhance opportunities for integration between the Trust and across areas within the Council.

6.8 **EqIA**
There is no requirement for an EQIA assessment as all partners will have their own equality planning arrangements in place.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**
7.1 The proposed reporting arrangements, along with the new governance structure will ensure that the performance of the Trust is transparent and accountable. Reports will be presented to CLT, Scrutiny Committee,

Executive, Council and the new Joint Strategic Partnership Group on a six monthly basis.

Background Documents / Electronic Links

Appendix 1 - BG Leisure and Culture Strategy 2019 – 2029

Appendix 2 - Review OF SLAs 2019/2020

Appendix 3 - Terms of Reference for STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP GROUP

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Cyngor Bwrdeisdref Sirol

Blaenau Gwent

County Borough Council

Leisure and Culture Strategy 2019 - 2029

'Building on our proud heritage and strong communities to enhance the lives of residents for a brighter future'

Foreword

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<tr>
<td>PICTURE OF LEADER</td>
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<td>PICTURE OF LEISURE / CULTURE OFFICER</td>
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Contents

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The Leisure and Culture Strategy is the first combined strategy for culture, leisure and physical and mental wellbeing in Blaenau Gwent. It replaces the previous Sport and Active Living Strategy 2014 and sits alongside other Council strategy documents that include the Corporate Plan, the Health and Wellbeing Plan 2018 -2023, a Strategy for the Future Direction of the Arts Service in Blaenau Gwent and the Leisure Library Strategy 2018.

The Leisure and Culture Strategy will set out the direction for our five core community services:

Sport and Leisure	Libraries, Educaiton and Learning Services	Destination Venues and Historical Properties	Outdoor Activity Centres and Sports Grounds	Live Enterntainment, Theatres and Arts Development

1 Parc Bryn Bach
2 Tredegar Library
3 Bewellty House and Park
4 Tredegar Sports Centre
5 Rassau Resource Centre
6 Beaufort Theatre and Ballroom
7 Brynteg Youth and Community Education Centre
8 Ebbw Vale Learning Action Centre
9 Ebbw Vale Library
10 Ebbw Vale Sports Centre - Inspire Team Base
11 Cwm Library
12 Brynmawr Library
13 Brynmawr Learning Action Centre
14 Blaina Library
15 Blaina Learning Action Centre
16 Abertillery Sports Centre
17 Abertillery Learning Action Centre
18 Abertillery Library
19 The Met, Abertillery

The Strategy aims to deliver a range of sustainable cultural, sporting and wellbeing activities across the five core services within the local community over the next ten years, by establishing an overarching ambition and performance outcomes for the service delivery within Blaenau Gwent.

The ambition is to be realised through a series of long-term objectives over the next ten years, with key priorities for action and delivery within the next five (5) years which will be monitored closely and reviewed annually. The strategy is intended as a high-level document to identify strategic and overarching issues; however, it also

provides an Action Programme of key areas of work to be delivered, identifying those organisations or person(s) responsible for ensuring that this work is undertaken.

The Strategy will be implemented and monitored to ensure that the key ambitions, objectives and actions are delivered.   The strategy pulls together national and local priorities across a range of areas that shape culture, leisure and physical activity, to produce a co-ordinated approach to the service provision.

The Strategy is an important way forward in the delivery of service developments within Leisure and Culture provision, which will have longer term benefits for our residents and visitors.

The Strategy will enable Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council to achieve value for money at a time when finances become more limited; though the needs, expectations and aspirations of our community members and partners are increasing. We believe this strategy sets clear ambitions for strong, sustainable and joined-up service provision which has no end. At its core is a staged approach on a long-term collaborative journey with committed partners, to allocate resources and targeted development work to ensure a sustainable future for lifelong participation in Sport, Culture and Physical Activity.

Any organisation may contribute towards achieving the ambitions and objectives set out in this strategy and are encouraged to utilise the strategy for their own businesses, organisations and societies so that together we may all build on our proud heritage and strong communities to enhance the lives of residents in Blaenau Gwent for a brighter future.

STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

This strategy has been developed in the context of national priorities and influences set against our local strategies and plans.

We have undertaken stakeholder engagement to help inform our priorities over the period of this strategy focussing on four key themes of 'People', 'Assets', 'Services' and 'Communication' which are applied to each of our five service areas to identify innovative service developments and investments to meet the expectations of our residents over the next ten years.

| Strategy Development | Themes | Service areas, actions and monitoring |

Strategy Development

National Priorities and influences
....
Blaenau Gwent Strategies and Plans
....
Stakeholder Engagement
....
... Leisure and Culture Strategy Development

Ambition and Objectives

Themes

1. People
2. Assets
3. Services
4. Communication

Service areas, actions and monitoring

Service 1 – Leisure and Sports Development

Service 2 – Libraries, Education and Learning

Service 3 – Destination Venues and Historical properties

Service 4 – Outdoor Activity Centres

Service 5 – Entertainment, Theatre and the Arts

WHERE WE ARE NOW

There are many strategies, policies and existing plans that impact on the Leisure and Culture Strategy. This strategy will aim to acknowledge these and map out the inter relationships between such plans and strategy documents and how these will impact on the delivery of the leisure and culture strategy to ensure it provides a meaningful impact.

Blaenau Gwent as a place

Blaenau Gwent is a place of heritage and dramatic change, with a sense of its past but its eyes firmly on the future. It is relatively small geographically, being at most 15 miles north to south, and 8 miles east to west. It is defined physically by high hillsides dividing the three main valleys. These valleys are home to towns and villages which seem to merge together into one. However, each community proudly maintains its own character and traditions.

Although the towns give the county borough a busy, urban feel, Blaenau Gwent is actually a largely rural area. Wherever you are, beautiful countryside is never far away.

In the last 20 years the people of Blaenau Gwent have faced challenges including the closure of coal mines in the 1980s and the closure of Ebbw Vale Steelworks in 2002, leading to huge job losses.

This is highlighted by a 5% reduction in the population between 1991 and 2011 which is in contrast to Wales overall which has seen a 4% increase. Currently, 49% of Blaenau Gwent working residents commute outside the borough to work and commuting distances have increased.

This period has however also seen significant structural and environment improvement, following major levels of capital investment, and the greening of our valleys as nature recovers from the long-term scaring caused through our historical industries. To reduce the effect of pit and steelwork closures, significant effort has been geared to re-focusing towards the manufacturing and services industry, which now makes up a significant part of the local economy.
The Blaenau Gwent Well-being Assessment, published in May 2017, provides a more detailed picture of local well-being.

Local Context

Blaenau Gwent facts and figures and key considerations

Some of the key facts to be considered in future planning and delivery of leisure opportunities are captured below:

- In 2015, the population of Blaenau Gwent was 69,544. This makes the area one of the smallest local authority areas in Wales.

- The population of the area is falling; however, the rate of decline is more stable than at any point since 1921 (when the population was over 125,000).

- The population is expected to continue to fall with a 1.2% decrease in the next 10 years.

- The population density in Blaenau Gwent was 638 people per square kilometre, compared with 149 per square kilometre for Wales as a whole.

- Analysis shows that many parts of the area have density levels similar to city areas. Blaenau Gwent, like the majority of places in the UK, has an overall population which is ageing.

- Generally, this is because less people are being born and those people that are alive are living longer.

- 28% of all people who live within Blaenau Gwent stated they had a limiting long-term health problem or illnesses, where day-to-day activities were limited. This was higher than Wales overall (23%) and was the 2nd highest level in Wales (behind Neath Port Talbot with 29%).

- The Blaenau Gwent's Black and Ethnic Minority population in 2011 was just under 1,900 which is 1.5% of the population. However, the number had increased from 1,300 in 2001. The gives the area one of the lowest levels of people from black and minority ethnic groups in Wales.

- Just over 41% of the Blaenau Gwent population stated they have no religion, which is above the Welsh average of 37%. This is a notable increase compared to 2001, with respective levels of 25% and 19%.

- Blaenau Gwent is the area in Wales with the highest percentage of small areas in the most deprived 10% (23.4%).

- There are 233 looked after children and 89 children on the Child Protection Register in Blaenau Gwent.

- 40% of adults across Blaenau Gwent reported drinking above the guidelines on at least one day in the past week, including 25% who reported drinking more than twice the daily guidelines (sometimes termed binge drinking) - this is broadly comparable with data across Wales.

There are four neighbourhood areas which align to our valleys, towns and neighbourhoods. The map below summarises the four areas, with Sirhowy coloured red, Ebbw Fawr coloured blue, Upper Ebbw Fach coloured orange and Lower Ebbw Fach coloured green.

- Obesity levels are increasing in Wales. Leisure has an important role to play in combating this but services and programmes will need to link with a range of health led initiatives and be targeted appropriately.

- Health and Wellbeing is a key focal area for current leisure services. Sport, physical activity and other forms of leisure clearly have a role to play in improving the health and wellbeing of Blaenau Gwent's residents. The "Active Wales" Physical Activity Action Plan identifies the need to develop strong local, formal and informal partnerships, target young people, focus on reducing the number of sedentary adults and increase the frequency of

participation as key areas for local action. These priorities are reflected in our plan.

- The National Vision for Sport highlights the importance of 'hooking' children on sport. It also identifies the need for strengthening partnership working and developing sustainable opportunities within the community. These objectives are reflected in our strategy.

- Economic Development and Tourism – developing and growing tourism is critical for the region and leisure makes a significant contribution. It is estimated that tourism generates £XX for the South Wales Valley's economy and supports an estimated xx jobs in the region. Ensuring the leisure offer remains 'fresh' and appealing is a key priority. 'Turning the Tide - Visitor Economy Strategy', recognises XXXX. This in turn will contribute towards a more sustainable economy. [Awaiting information]

- Educational Attainment and Employment – the latest figures from Sport Wales show that sport alone provides more than 23,000 jobs in Wales (an increase of almost 20% from the previous survey). Sport and leisure can provide opportunities to acquire key life skills, which can contribute to increased educational attainment or development of softer skills, such as confidence which can be key to enhancing employment prospects.

- Social and Community Development and Cohesion – Sport Wales acknowledges the potential of sport to enhance social capital – 23% of all voluntary, community and not-for-profit organisations are sport and recreation bodies. Involvement in leisure can also provide a 'feel good' factor, civic pride and for many can represent the only form of 'community engagement' that they experience.

Future Challenges

While we believe the future is positive, it is not without its challenges. Increased health issues place increased financial pressure on the local health services alongside an ageing population. With many residents working outside of the Borough the local economy is under threat and requires continual injection of support to maintain the status quo. This also presents us with the opportunity of becoming an affordable place to live and commute. With the small population within Blaenau Gwent it is incumbent on every service provider to appeal to wider audiences from neighbouring authorities through to tourists attracted to the area. With its wealth of cultural history, the development of the tourism product will be a key focus for the Council over the next 10 years.

Current service and operating environment

Since 2014 the Leisure and Culture services have been operated by an outsourced Leisure Trust on behalf of the Council. This includes most of our major leisure and cultural assets; the sports centres at Tredegar, Ebbw Vale, and Abertillery; libraries at Tredegar, Ebbw Vale, Cwm, Brynmawr, Blaina and Abertillery; learning action centres at Ebbw Vale and Brynmawr; Bedwellty House, Parc Bryn Bach, and the Metropole in Abertillery.

Despite the critical importance of all these leisure and cultural services and facilities provided by the Council to the health of local people the statutory obligations generally only relate to the provision of library services and learning services, and therefore, places increasing pressure on the Council to find new and innovative ways to provide services in the future.

Importantly, as part of the new strategy, the Council have undertaken a review of the Trust's performance over the first five years of their operation to ensure that arrangements have the best possible chance of success over the next ten years.

The Council recognises that it faces some significant challenges in terms of its current building assets, with ageing stock and infrastructure investment required, and ensuring that future investments are evidence based and clearly support key objectives in maximising the benefit for local people.

The Council also recognise that in order to have a strong influence on activity levels, and therefore, health and wellbeing of residents, further partnership working and a collaborative approach is required.

This is set in the context of ensuring that services remain accessible to all parts of the community, with targeted interventions in the most deprived areas.

Partnerships

The Council will focus during the period of this strategy on working with existing partners and facilitating effective new partnerships to provide the greatest impact increasing participation for all continuing to improve outcomes through our strategic partnership's framework.

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Commercial approaches-external funding partners encouraging innovation

Given the limited financial resources available to the Council we will be seeking out development partners, neighbouring authority links and external funding partners to assist with longer term investments within the Blaenau Gwent area, so that community assets may continue to be developed and maintained for the next 10 years and beyond. Commercial developments will become the priority for the longer-term sustainability of the service, regardless of the organisation that operates these services.

Delivering wider social, education and economic objectives

The importance of leisure in meeting the wider objectives of the council should not be under-estimated. A vibrant leisure offer is important to meet wider health, social, wellbeing, economic and educational priorities. This is reflected in the recent broadening of the scope and remit of the Leisure, Libraries and Culture Service to ensure that planning and delivery contributes to wider council targets. The re-shaped service should include outreach work programmes to target disengaged members of the community. This may include the use of leisure to support young people's personal and social development, empowerment and access to information and resources that will enable them to move from dependants to independent, as well as supporting and reintegrating socially isolated older members of the community.

Key messages from some of our partners:

We consulted and engaged with a number of key local stakeholders and partner organisations in developing this strategy:

- A number of partners said that they would like to work more closely with the council, to have more formal partnership arrangements in place, including meeting and reporting mechanisms.

- Partners highlighted the potential for future joint working and collaboration on projects as part of a multi-agency approach to delivering services in the future.

- The importance of volunteering was mentioned by a number of partners; with some organisations able to offer training and support for staff and volunteers and some suggesting the idea of reward programme to encourage volunteers.

- Partners would be keen to integrate health and community facilities into new developments in the future to achieve good health and well-being outcomes. (housing, arts)

- Partners mentioned the value of invest to save projects so that capital ideas could be progressed and implemented. Strong internal processes will be needed to support contract management.

- Marketing, social media presence and communications systems such as online bookings and databases were mentioned by a number of partners, and some are keen to work together to improve marketing.

- The possibility of sharing of some other central resources such as HR and IT were also mentioned by some partners.

- Partners are keen to mentor young people into employment and training.

- The housing company is concerned with the fitness and health of young people.

- Partners wish to keep their staff fit and healthy and the housing company is concerned with the health and well-being of tenants and keeping people safe in their homes for longer is a priority

- The cost of taking part in leisure is an issue for the client groups of some partners

- There is a need for more safe outdoor play areas - particularly in relation to social housing - and the housing company would be keen to create more community gardens and play areas on the outdoor spaces on their existing developments (funding would be needed).

- There is a need to review dual use arrangements with schools, which aren't felt to work very well, and more dialogue with the headteachers forum is important.

- There is a need to rationalise or reconfigure the library service to make it more sustainable. A strong volunteer base will be needed, and friends' groups should be explored.

- Some partners would like to explore partnering with other cultural trusts in order to deliver joint programming and gain economies of scale and strategic alliances.

- Partners were keen that asset maintenance should be better planned in the future.

- Partners were keen to work together to plan and aspire for the future, and not let past performance be an inhibitor to future achievements.

We are very grateful to all our partner organisations who contributed to the development of the strategy and look forward to working together to deliver the strategy over the next ten years.

OUR AMBITION AND PRIORITIES

Our Ambition

Our ambition for the Leisure and Culture Strategy is to set out the council and its partners' aspirations, direction and priorities for leisure and culture over the next ten years, with a focus on deliverable priorities over the next five-year period.

It is intended to develop the leisure and culture offer already available to residents and visitors across the borough, to increase the number of people engaged in the range of services and involved in the delivery of leisure and culture opportunities, and to increase the profile and importance of leisure and culture participation for all members of the community.

> 'By 2024 Blaenau Gwent aims to have established a strong reputation for collaborative working across a range of quality service delivery models, that provide accessible leisure opportunities attracting high levels of participation to improve the happiness, mental health and physical wellbeing of residents and visitors alike'

Our Priorities

1. Increasing participation for all

2. Improving physical and mental health and well-being

3. Developing effective collaboration with partners

4. Maintaining and building upon the existing leisure and culture offer maximising opportunities

1. Increasing participation for all

By increasing participation rates in our leisure and culture services for all demographic groups, encouraging known groups with lower than average rates of participation, we will support growth and efficiency in an inclusive and sustainable manner, whilst at the same time reducing inequality and disadvantage.

We recognise that this will require some inward investment into the asset infrastructure, to provide an opportunity for increased usage and better maintenance of assets, to improve the financial performance that will support and offset those statutory services that inevitably are cost based only and less able to contribute to income targets.

2. Improving physical and mental health and well-being

We know from national research how important physical and mental health is ensure we live full and active lives. An active body and mind can often add years to people's lives.

By supporting initiatives from existing and future partners we can collectively help to increase activity levels across Blaenau Gwent and help in the prevention and management of many conditions and diseases including coronary heart disease, diabetes, cancer, and the growing issue of childhood obesity.

People can engage with leisure and culture in many different ways at every stage of their lives; and each encounter can have a positive impact upon health and wellbeing.

3. Developing effective collaboration with partners

Over the next five years we will continue to focus on more effective ways to deliver our services working, not just with the existing service providers, but with new people, organisations and local investors who can add benefit to the development of the local services and facilities for the enjoyment of all residents of Blaenau Gwent, along with visitors attracted the area.

Regular interaction between partners is essential to help ensure success however the Council does wish to retain influence over council led services, to ensure a consistency of approach, quality assurance and to facilitate the transparency of delivery that is fundamental to the success of the strategy.

We recognise the need to support and help to develop a network of volunteers and staff involved in delivering culture and leisure in Blaenau Gwent, and to help all individuals develop their talent, skills and confidence.

4. Maintaining and building upon the existing leisure and culture offer maximising opportunities

We live in a very challenging financial climate and working together is vital in maintaining existing provision in the most efficient manner. It is imperative therefore that the leisure and culture services become even more customer and business focussed over the period of this strategy to ensure that the commercial performance can be sustained long term and ultimately without any (or with significantly reduced) service subsidy from the Council.

There is much success to build upon following investment in leisure and culture in the past and we are committed to exploring further investment opportunities in our services in the future.

Delivery Themes

To deliver this vision we aspire to identify what we want, how we will get there and who will be involved. This has been captured within four overlapping themes across each service area as follows:

People	Service developments and innovation needed to meet the expectations of local people.
Assets	How assets will be managed and what investments will be needed over the next ten years.
Services	The services that will be provided including aspirations for the longer term.
Communication	How progress will be communicated to partners and residents and how it will be measured and reviewed.

Key Objectives

Whilst the strategy covers a ten year period from 2019 to 2029, over the first five years we plan to:

- Develop a financial sustainability plan for Leisure Services, in line with the requirements of the Council's medium-term financial strategy (MTFS);

- Explore invest to save initiatives to reduce revenue implications across our leisure and culture services;

- Review delivery options for Leisure and Culture Services;

- Initiate a fundamental review to modernise community library and learning provision;

- Undertake a review of future options for Sports Centres, particularly Tredegar Sports Centre:

- Secure investment in sports and cultural facilities e.g. the 21st Century Schools Programme;

- Transfer responsibilities for sports grounds to local sports clubs ;

DELIVERY

The Council already adopts a mixed model of delivery – directly delivering some services while for others Alternative Delivery Models have been established. For example, traditional Leisure, Culture and Learning Services are now delivered across Blaenau Gwent by a Charitable Trust limited by guarantee. The amount of services the Council directly delivers may decrease further depending on the future financial position. In time, the Council may act as a commissioner of services ensuring that they are responsive to local needs, centred around the person and community based. It will also look to become a more commercial organisation which generates income and delivers cost reductions. This in turn will help to make local services more sustainable and raise money to re-invest in our priorities.

In some instances, it might be appropriate for the Council to move into more of an enabling role supporting community groups and social enterprises to gain the skills and competencies to be able to retain and deliver services locally themselves (i.e. Community Asset Transfers). The council will also look to deliver services in collaboration with other councils in the future. There will also be a role for the Council in developing a renewed sense of place in the area and building pride in the borough, which could involve influencing and supporting partner organisations to work to common goals to meet the needs and aspirations of the community. The Council's role over time may be less about doing things to and for residents and communities and more about creating the capacity, interest, expertise and enthusiasm for individuals and communities to do things for themselves.

MONITORING

It is important that people can see what progress the Council is making against the priorities outlined in this Strategy and hold us properly to account.

We recognise that to maintain and improve opportunities for local residents, it is important to monitor our performance and manage the overall delivery of the key actions.

To monitor performance, a set of specific indicators will be developed. The indicators and targets will need to be agreed with key partners and set in accordance with some of the additional research planned (mapping and auditing), ensuring targets take account of baseline (current position) and ensuring they can be realistically achieved.

Also, it is vital that those employed within these services understand how their contribution to achieving our shared priorities is valued and the positive impact they can have on people's lives through the effective and efficient delivery of services.

It is essential that during the next ten years service providers demonstrate a range of good practice outcomes to future generations set alongside the strategy objectives. We need to be pushing the boundaries of the possible each year and enhancing

the collaborations that take place locally to enhance lives and support community cohesion and wellbeing.

Moving forwards we will also introduce measurements demonstrating the impact of leisure and culture on the socio-economic lifestyles of the local community.

RISK

There are some significant risks associated with delivery of the leisure and culture strategy which will be regularly updated and reviewed:

- Impact on culture – cuts are affecting non-statutory services such as culture and leisure facilities:

- Competition from other local leisure and culture destinations;

- Consequences of the economic challenge facing future generations;

- Impact on income - poverty in Wales is higher than UK average;

- Impact on affordability of services;

- Impact on health - people who experience poverty or who live in deprived areas have fewer years of life free from illness or disability;

- Impact on children – children in low-income households have poorer mental and physical health;

- Growing skills gap – there is likely to be an increase in the skills gap as professional and managerial jobs grow and semi and unskilled jobs reduce;

CONSULTATION

In accordance with the Future Generations Act, following the completion of the draft strategy a wider consultation process will take place for feedback and final collaboration on the completion of the leisure and culture strategy. This consultation process will include a number of strategic partners alongside local community users and groups that are involved in achieving the well-being goals and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the strategy. Once this consultation is completed the final strategy will be put forward for approval by the Council Executive and Scrutiny Committees.

We welcome any feedback you might have about the Leisure and Culture Strategy 2019 - 2029. If there is any information you think could be considered for, or if you require this document in a different format e.g. large print, Braille, audio version, etc please contact us using the information below.

2. INTRODUCTION

The Leisure and Culture Strategy is the first combined strategy for culture, leisure and physical and mental wellbeing in Blaenau Gwent. It replaces the previous Sport and Active Living Strategy 2014 and sits alongside other Council strategy documents that include the Corporate Plan, the Health and Wellbeing Plan 2018 -2023, a Strategy for the Future Direction of the Arts Service in Blaenau Gwent and the Leisure Library Strategy 2018.

The Leisure and Culture Strategy will set out the direction for our five core community services:

Sport and Leisure

Destination Venues and Historical Properties

Live Enterntainment, Theatres and Arts Development

Libraries, Educaiton and Learning Services

Outdoor Activity Centres and Sports Grounds

The Strategy aims to deliver a range of sustainable cultural, sporting and wellbeing activities across the five core services within the local community over the next ten years, by establishing an overarching ambition and performance outcomes for the service delivery within Blaenau Gwent.

The ambition is to be realised through a series of long-term objectives over the next ten years, with key priorities for action and delivery within the next five (5) years which will be monitored closely and reviewed annually. The strategy is intended as a high-level document to identify strategic and overarching issues; however, it also provides an Action Programme of key areas of work to be delivered, identifying those organisations or person(s) responsible for ensuring that this work is undertaken.

The Strategy will be implemented and monitored to ensure that the key ambitions, objectives and actions are delivered.   The strategy pulls together national and local priorities across a range of areas that shape culture, leisure and physical activity, to produce a co-ordinated approach to the service provision.

The Strategy is an important way forward in the delivery of service developments within Leisure and Culture provision, which will have longer term benefits for our residents and visitors.

The Strategy will enable Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council to achieve value for money at a time when finances become more limited; though the needs, expectations and aspirations of our community members and partners are increasing. We believe this strategy sets clear ambitions for strong, sustainable and joined-up service provision which has no end. At its core is a staged approach on a long-term collaborative journey with committed partners, to allocate resources and targeted development work to ensure a sustainable future for lifelong participation in Sport, Culture and Physical Activity.

Any organisation may contribute towards achieving the ambitions and objectives set out in this strategy and are encouraged to utilise the strategy for their own businesses, organisations and societies so that together we may all build on our proud heritage and strong communities to enhance the lives of residents in Blaenau Gwent for a brighter future.

The strategy has been developed by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council in conjunction with FMG Consulting and alongside key partners that include:

- Aneurin Leisure Trust
- Arts Wales
- Museums Archives and Libraries Division (MALD)
- CADW – Welsh Government
- Disability Sport Wales
- The Future Generations Commission
- Sport Wales
- UKactive
- Tai Calon Housing Trust
- The Local Health Board - Aneurin Primary Health Care Trust
- Local education providers, particularly schools.

3. WHERE WE ARE NOW

There are many strategies, policies and existing plans that impact on the Leisure and Culture Strategy. This strategy will aim to acknowledge these and map out the inter relationships between such plans and strategy documents and how these will impact on the delivery of the leisure and culture strategy to ensure it provides a meaningful impact.

Blaenau Gwent as a place

Blaenau Gwent is a place of heritage and dramatic change, with a sense of its past but its eyes firmly on the future. It is relatively small geographically, being at most 15 miles north to south, and 8 miles east to west. It is defined physically by high hillsides dividing the three main valleys. These valleys are home to towns and villages which seem to merge together into one. However, each community proudly maintains its own character and traditions.

Although the towns give the county borough a busy, urban feel, Blaenau Gwent is actually a largely rural area. Wherever you are, beautiful countryside is never far away.

A short history

Before the early 1800s, the area that is now Blaenau Gwent was a quiet, rural area dominated by tiny villages and farmland. Welsh was the only language, and English was little understood.

The start of the industrial revolution sparked transformational change as people looked to take advantage of the plentiful supply of resources that could be found. In the first instance this took the form of ironworks, quickly followed by coal mining and steel making.

As the industries grew, so did the demand for labour and the population of Blaenau Gwent grew remarkably. Between the early 19th and early 20th century the population rose from around 1,200 to well over 120,000.

As our communities thrived, so did the need for services required to deal with this social and cultural explosion, examples being education, health, shops and leisure opportunities. This led to the growth of a network of communities and neighbourhoods, which make up the villages and towns that we know today.

The strong commitment to social justice and a solid work ethic in Blaenau Gwent is demonstrated by campaigns for improvements in standards of living. Examples of this include the first ever board of health which marks Blaenau Gwent as the birthplace of the NHS, campaigns for electoral reform, abolition of company-run shops, and reductions in working hours, many of which still influence the way people live their lives today. The community spirit is a legacy of these achievements and will feature heavily within the Strategy.

Present day Blaenau Gwent

The period from the late 1980s saw the formation of Blaenau Gwent as it is known today. In 1996 it changed from a district of Gwent County to a county borough council, following local government reorganisation.

In the last 20 years the people of Blaenau Gwent have faced challenges including the closure of coal mines in the 1980s and the closure of Ebbw Vale Steelworks in 2002, leading to huge job losses.

This is highlighted by a 5% reduction in the population between 1991 and 2011 which is in contrast to Wales overall which has seen a 4% increase. Currently, 49% of Blaenau Gwent working residents commute outside the borough to work and commuting distances have increased. We cannot underestimate the effect of these issues. Even so, in the last 20 years the area has seen significant structural and environment improvement, following major levels of capital investment, and the greening of our valleys as nature recovers from the long-term scaring caused through our historical industries. To reduce the effect of pit and steelwork closures, significant effort has been geared to re-focusing towards the manufacturing and services industry, which now makes up a significant part of the local economy.

The Blaenau Gwent Well-being Assessment, published in May 2017, provides a more detailed picture of local well-being[1].

National Context

The Leisure and Culture Strategy has been developed at a time of significant financial constraint for Blaenau Gwent Council and change within the public sector. Financial austerity has been a feature of the UK Government's agenda for a number of years and as a result we continue to face cuts to the budget received from Central Government.

By the end of the decade the budget will have been cut in real terms by 7% since 2010 resulting in £1.2bn less to spend on vital public services in Wales. For Blaenau Gwent this has meant Welsh Government funding has remained static since 2010/11, which equates to a real term reduction of £7m. As a result, tough decisions need to be made on priorities for spending, ensuring vital services are maintained for the most vulnerable in our communities.

There may be a secondary financial impact with the UK's decision to leave the European Union with the loss of European Funding from Blaenau Gwent in future years making the financial horizon increasingly challenging.

Local government needs to be equipped with the powers, capability and capacity to address the challenges we all face and deliver the public services our citizens need, ensuring public money is used efficiently and effectively. Regional collaboration is critical to local government and in the future we will undoubtedly see increased levels of regional working. Other strategic collaborations include

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[1] Opener to 2.3 is an extract from the Wellbeing Plan 2018

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areas like Health, Education and Social Services which remain important in our efforts to improve well-being[2].

We have a rich heritage in this area and our buildings and countryside are part of Blaenau Gwent's attractiveness as a place to live, work and visit. Our local environment should be used to help improve the health and wellbeing of our families and communities and be enhanced for future generations to continue to enjoy. There is also a real desire to see the communities where people live kept clean, tidy and useable, creating areas that people can be proud of.

The Council are determined to improve the economic outlook for Blaenau Gwent as good quality, well paid employment is a key factor for people to live healthier and happier lives. We are seeking to improve the health and wellbeing of residents through the delivery of effective leisure, culture, historical and tourism services in the area, integrating collaborative working and cross utilisation of facilities by residents and visitors to the area with improved market engagement strategies, better marketing and communications, a transparent approach to service delivery and an open reporting mechanism that will provide confidence to partners and stakeholders.

This strategy has been developed through extensive consultation with both regional and local groups, organisations and service users to establish the priorities for the next ten years.

UKactive - The inactivity crisis

In 2014 leisure industry leaders UKactive released the 'Turning the Tide on Inactivity' Report that created a catalyst for change within the UK. The UKactive research institute provided evidence that physical inactivity accounts for nearly 1/5 of premature deaths in the UK, with projections showing that inactivity levels are due to increase by a further 15% by 2030.

The report also found that inactivity levels were ten per cent higher in the most deprived areas compared to the least deprived. At the time Local authorities were spending on average less than 3% of annual public health budgets on physical inactivity interventions.

Physical inactivity represents 10% of total societal costs when compared against other top-tier public health concerns including sexual health, smoking, obesity and drug and alcohol misuse. On average, it is costing the economy in each local authority £18 million per 100,000 people every year. It was calculated that if every local authority was able to reduce inactivity levels by one per cent year on year over a five-year period they would save local taxpayers £44 per household. More importantly, they would improve the health and wellbeing of the local community[3].

This report secured Government and industry support and provided a new focus for leisure providers and local authorities, as the burden of inactivity is placing increased

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[2] Extract from the Blaenau Gwent Corporate Plan 2018-2023 message from the Leader, cut down to one page
[3] Extract from UKactive turning the tide on inactivity report

pressure on already strained resources and is unsustainable. Several local authorities have acknowledged this already and are championing collaborations between their leisure, open spaces and public health teams to promote active lifestyles.

Urgent action is required to get more people, more active, more often. This includes taking an innovative and alternative approach to activity delivery to include simple lifestyle changes such as walking and cycling as adopted modes of transport, for children to become physically literate from the earliest possible age, and for an industrial scale shift across society to embed physical activity into people's daily lives and routines.

The leisure and Culture strategy is written against this prevalent backdrop that recognises the positive impact physical activity and leisure engagement has on physical and mental health and wellbeing.

The Wellbeing for Future Generations (Wales)

The Wellbeing for Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 challenges public bodies to make:

> "Transformational Change to the way they do their business", with "decisions that focus on the long-term implications of their actions". Its vision is "to help create a Wales that we all want to live in, now and in the future".

The context of the act in this strategy is ensure the sport and leisure facilities landscape is fit for the well-being of future generations - modern, inclusive, attractive, accessible and efficient; meeting local needs; raising levels of participation in sport and physical activity and contributing to greater success on the international stage.

A future infrastructure where there is a collective responsibility and approach to provide appropriate opportunities - shared by a wide range of organisations involved in the planning, provision and management of sports and leisure facilities (Voluntary and Private Sectors, Schools, Colleges and Universities, alongside Local Government and other public-sector bodies).

The act and stakeholder feedback focussed on embedding the **'5 ways of working'** in any future strategy or approach taken by the local authority or service delivery partner as a means to success in meeting the Act. The 5 ways of working are:

1. **Long-term**
The importance of balancing short-term needs with the needs to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs

2. **Integration**
Considering how the public body's well-being objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals, on their objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies

3. **Involvement**
The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the body serves

4. Collaboration

Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the body itself) that could help the body to meet its well-being objectives

5. Prevention

How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help public bodies meet their objectives

These should be considered alongside how best to maximise the **7 wellbeing goals** that have been set out as:

1. A Prosperous wales

2. A Resilient wales

3. A Healthier wales

4. A more equal wales

5. A Wales of cohesive communities

6. A wales of vibrant culture and welsh language

7. A globally responsible wales

The essence of the act seeks to encourage collaboration and to tackle some of the key issues surrounding wales over the coming years which include infrastructure and people – personal developments, skills for the future, volunteer skills development, energy management, climate change, health and wellbeing, tackling social loneliness and isolation, community housing and social prescribing.

There already exists a Memorandum of Understanding between the public health board and sports/arts council to work collaboratively to tackle inactivity, social isolation, mental health and wellbeing issues, with positive results being recorded from this work. This approach needs to be widened to maximise the impact across the County Borough.

Collaborative working already exists within arts and leisure for Blaenau Gwent with the **Active Gwent Board** that includes neighbouring authorities in Caerphilly, Newport, Blaenau Gwent, Monmouthshire and Torfaen working together to deliver the local plan for sport 2018-2019, alongside the 'Art is a Possible' discrete project through the Arts Council.

It is critical to future proof the services against the unknown that may occur in the future, such as the removal of the steelworks which had a significant impact on the local community – what risks exist locally that the leisure and culture strategy need to mitigate against.

Sport Wales

The vision for Sport in Wales is to '**unite a proud sporting nation,** where **every child is hooked on sport for life** and Wales is a **nation of champions**.

This vision is supported by clearly defined priorities.

1. Sporting innovation: Wales has a sports sector that embraces collaboration, encouraging new ways of delivering opportunities to increase participation and improve elite performance.

2. Skills for life in sport: Every child and young person is provided with the skills and confidence from an early age to be physically literate through high quality, engaging sporting experiences.

3. Sporting communities: We have communities with sport at the heart of them, offering joined up opportunities for every child and young person to undertake at least five hours of safe, high quality sport every week and sustaining their engagement throughout their adult life.

4. Sporting Excellence: We are a nation that excels in nurturing sporting talent and delivers ongoing success on the international stage.

5. Growing a Skilled and Passionate workforce: All those involved in sport, whether in a professional or voluntary capacity, are supported to pass on their skills and passion for sport to the people of Wales.

The aim of this strategy is to shape what this vision will mean for sport and leisure services in Blaenau Gwent and how we will align our approach to that of the national vision. We will need to evidence current performance and set out how we will contribute to this vision in our strategy.

The Sport Wales corporate strategy sets out a new regional way of working which will change the way we engage with Sport Wales and encourage greater collaboration between regional partners. The first Regional structure will be adopted early in North Wales, with Gwent lined up to be the next region. During the next 10 years this new structure will provide new opportunities for joint working on a regional level and will encourage greater collaboration of shared good practice to positively impact on outcomes across leisure, health and communities. The regional structures will have a flexible delivery plan to enable better local decision-making powers and bespoke outcomes prescribed for region.

Sport Wales recognise that Gwent is already successfully working on a regional basis with the 5 Authorities combined to deliver the Active Gwent Board which offers a good standard of reporting outcomes. For a small authority there is good work being delivered including the street games and a strong young ambassador programme at Aneurin Leisure.

There is an 'active and healthy' action plan in development which sets out prosperity for all.

A new sport wales strategy is being launched in April 2019.

Sport Wales community strategy sets out:

> **'An active, healthy and inclusive Wales, where sport, physical activity and active recreation provide a common platform for participation, fun and achievement, which binds communities and the nation and where the**

outstanding environment of Wales is used sustainably to enhance confidence in ourselves.'[4]

The strategy has been developed to set out clear priorities and focus energy to enable a dramatic shift in the range and number of people involved in sport.

Amongst other outcomes that are set out in the strategy, an ideal sporting community would include;

- Schools which embrace sport's power to positively improve a pupil's wellbeing, ability to learn, grow and develop as young adults;
- Modernised offers, such as short, sharp variations of sports; responding to growing time pressures and lifestyle choices of the Welsh population
- A broad range of quality providers, collaborating effectively to maximise investments for sports participation and minimise wasteful duplication.
- A confident embrace of technology, marketing and PR approaches as a means of attracting participants and recruiting the workforce;
- A diverse, passionate and skilled workforce; paid and voluntary, to encourage, inspire and support participants

Investing in thriving clubs, where quality, varied and sustainable provision becomes the norm, has to be a key focus for Sport Wales, where notable successes has been delivered in this area.

There are five key priority areas for community sports. These are:

- Local decisions – creating opportunities by meeting local demand
- Quality Education – creating opportunities by developing skills, enjoyment and confidence
- Committed workforce – creating opportunities by attracting and investing in the right people, in the right places
- Appropriate facilities – creating opportunities through providing inspirational environments and programming

One of the key areas of focus for facility infrastructure changes moving forwards is to develop a much wider, more appealing offer through more informal and recreational opportunities, capable of engaging children, young people and adults of all abilities, and successfully attracting people to re-join the world of sport. A particular challenge will be to address the decline in the number of young girls and women taking part[5].

Sport Wales will use five key measures to assess the sector's progress over the period of their new strategies:

1. children doing three occasions of sport in a week (extracurricular and within the wider community setting)
2. club membership;
3. 16-24 adult participation (three occasions per week)
4. school key stage 3 attainment;

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[4] Extract 2.1 of the Inquiry into Participation Levels in Sport In Wales Report
[5] Extract from the Executive Summary of the Sport Wales Community Strategy

5. number of adults volunteering in Wales.

The Local Context

Blaenau Gwent facts and figures and key considerations

Some of the key facts to be considered in future planning and delivery of leisure opportunities are captured below:

- In 2015, the population of Blaenau Gwent was 69,544. This makes the area one of the smallest local authority areas in Wales.

- The population of the area is falling; however, the rate of decline is more stable than at any point since 1921 (when the population was over 125,000).

- The population is expected to continue to fall with a 1.2% decrease in the next 10 years.

- The population density in Blaenau Gwent was 638 people per square kilometre, compared with 149 per square kilometre for Wales as a whole.

- Analysis shows that many parts of the area have density levels similar to city areas. Blaenau Gwent, like the majority of places in the UK, has an overall population which is ageing.

- Generally, this is because less people are being born and those people that are alive are living longer.

- 28% of all people who live within Blaenau Gwent stated they had a limiting long-term health problem or illnesses, where day-to-day activities were limited. This was higher than Wales overall (23%) and was the 2nd highest level in Wales (behind Neath Port Talbot with 29%).

- The Blaenau Gwent's Black and Ethnic Minority population in 2011 was just under 1,900 which is 1.5% of the population. However, the number had increased from 1,300 in 2001. The gives the area one of the lowest levels of people from black and minority ethnic groups in Wales.

- Just over 41% of the Blaenau Gwent population stated they have no religion, which is above the Welsh average of 37%. This is a notable increase compared to 2001, with respective levels of 25% and 19%.

- Blaenau Gwent is the area in Wales with the highest percentage of small areas in the most deprived 10% (23.4%).

- There are 233 looked after children and 89 children on the Child Protection Register in Blaenau Gwent.

- 40% of adults across Blaenau Gwent reported drinking above the guidelines on at least one day in the past week, including 25% who reported drinking more than twice the daily guidelines (sometimes termed binge drinking) - this is broadly comparable with data across Wales.

There are four neighbourhood areas which align to our valleys, towns and neighbourhoods. The map below summarises the four areas, with Sirhowy coloured red, Ebbw Fawr coloured blue, Upper Ebbw Fach coloured orange and Lower Ebbw Fach coloured green.

North Ebbw Vale
Pop: 6,976

Brynmawr
Pop: 5,593

Nantyglo & Blaina
Pop: 9,228

North Tredegar
Pop: 7,034

North Abertillery
Pop: 8,927

South Tredegar
Pop: 8,122

Central Ebbw Vale
Pop: 7,850

South Abertillery
Pop: 7,273

South Ebbw Vale
Pop: 8,541

- Obesity levels are increasing in Wales. Leisure has an important role to play in combating this but services and programmes will need to link with a range of health led initiatives and be targeted appropriately.

- Health and Wellbeing is a key focal area for current leisure services. Sport, physical activity and other forms of leisure clearly have a role to play in improving the health and wellbeing of Blaenau Gwent's residents. The "Active Wales" Physical Activity Action Plan identifies the need to develop strong local, formal and informal partnerships, target young people, focus on reducing the number of sedentary adults and increase the frequency of participation as key areas for local action. These priorities are reflected in our plan.

- The National Vision for Sport highlights the importance of 'hooking' children on sport. It also identifies the need for strengthening partnership working and developing sustainable opportunities within the community. These objectives are reflected in our strategy.

- Economic Development and Tourism – developing and growing tourism is critical for the region and leisure makes a significant contribution. It is estimated that tourism generates **£XX** for the South Wales Valley's economy and supports an estimated **XX** jobs in the region. Ensuring the leisure offer remains 'fresh' and appealing is a key priority. 'Turning the Tide - Visitor Economy Strategy', recognises **XXXX**. This in turn will contribute towards a more sustainable economy. [AWAITING INFORMATION]

- Educational Attainment and Employment – the latest figures from Sport Wales show that sport alone provides more than 23,000 jobs in Wales (an increase of

almost 20% from the previous survey). Sport and leisure can provide opportunities to acquire key life skills, which can contribute to increased educational attainment or development of softer skills, such as confidence which can be key to enhancing employment prospects.

- Social and Community Development and Cohesion – Sport Wales acknowledges the potential of sport to enhance social capital – 23% of all voluntary, community and not-for-profit organisations are sport and recreation bodies. Involvement in leisure can also provide a 'feel good' factor, civic pride and for many can represent the only form of 'community engagement' that they experience.

The Future Challenges

While we believe the future is positive, it is not without its challenges. Increased health issues place increased financial pressure on the local health services alongside an ageing population. With many residents working outside of the Borough the local economy is under threat and requires continual injection of support to maintain the status quo. This also presents us with the opportunity of becoming an affordable place to live and commute. With the small population within Blaenau Gwent it is incumbent on every service provider to appeal to wider audiences from neighbouring authorities through to tourists attracted to the area. With its wealth of cultural history, the development of the tourism product will be a key focus for the Council over the next 10 years.

Current Service and Operating Environment

Since 2014 the Leisure and Culture services have been operated by an outsourced Leisure Trust on behalf of the Council. This includes most of our major leisure and cultural assets; the sports centres at Tredegar, Ebbw Vale, and Abertillery; libraries at Tredegar, Ebbw Vale, Cwm, Brynmawr, Blaina and Abertillery; learning action centres at Ebbw Vale and Brynmawr; Bedwellty House, Parc Bryn Bach, and the Metropole in Abertillery.

Despite the critical importance of all these leisure and cultural services and facilities provided by the Council to the health of local people the statutory obligations generally only relate to the provision of library services and learning services, and therefore, places increasing pressure on the Council to find new and innovative ways to provide services in the future.

Importantly, as part of the new strategy, the Council have undertaken a review of the Trust's performance over the first five years of their operation to ensure that arrangements have the best possible chance of success over the next ten years.

The Council recognises that it faces some significant challenges in terms of its current building assets, with ageing stock and infrastructure investment required, and ensuring that future investments are evidence based and clearly support key objectives in maximising the benefit for local people.

The Council also recognise that in order to have a strong influence on activity levels, and therefore, health and wellbeing of residents, further partnership working and a collaborative approach is required.

This is set in the context of ensuring that services remain accessible to all parts of the community, with targeted interventions in the most deprived areas.

Partnerships

The Council will focus during the period of this strategy on working with existing partners and facilitating effective new partnerships to provide the greatest impact increasing participation for all continuing to improve outcomes through our strategic partnerships framework.

Community Asset Transfer (CAT)

CAT has become a more popular way to deliver services in recent years because of decreasing budgets to operate a range of community-based services, not all can be sustained. The opportunity to transfer assets from the Council to local community groups and volunteers when the costs of maintaining the service in-house are no longer viable, provides much needed support for local assets that have a community following.

CAT will continue to be considered where finances and sustainability demands it.

Subcontracted services

Where services are subcontracted to professional organisations, a transparent delivery and reporting mechanism needs to be adopted to provide valuable insight

into the operation and performance of the contract. The Council will want to influence subcontractors' approach to the delivery of these services to ensure they meet the specification of the leisure and culture strategy and will want to be provided with evidence that this is happening on the ground.

Visitor numbers and participation

The leisure and culture services we provide through our partner organisations will continue to be monitored, reviewed and assessed regularly and will have a direct impact on how the leisure and culture strategy is delivered.

Commercial approaches-external funding partners encouraging innovation

Given the limited financial resources available to the Council we will be seeking out development partners, neighbouring authority links and external funding partners to assist with longer term investments within the Blaenau Gwent area, so that community assets may continue to be developed and maintained for the next 10 years and beyond. Commercial developments will become the priority for the longer-term sustainability of the service, regardless of the organisation that operates these services.

Delivering wider social, education and economic objectives

The importance of leisure in meeting the wider objectives of the council should not be under estimated. A vibrant leisure offer is important to meet wider health, social, wellbeing, economic and educational priorities. This is reflected in the recent broadening of the scope and remit of the Leisure, Libraries and Culture Service to ensure that planning and delivery contributes to wider council targets. The re-shaped service should include outreach work programmes to target disengaged members of the community. This may include the use of leisure to support young people's personal and social development, empowerment and access to information and resources that will enable them to move from dependants to independent, as well as supporting and reintegrating socially isolated older members of the community.

4. STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT OVERVIEW

This strategy has been developed in the context of national priorities and influences set against our local strategies and plans.

We have undertaken stakeholder engagement to help inform our priorities over the period of this strategy focussing on four key themes of 'People', 'Assets', 'Services' and 'Communication' which are applied to each of our five service areas to identify innovative service developments and investments to meet the expectations of our residents over the next ten years.
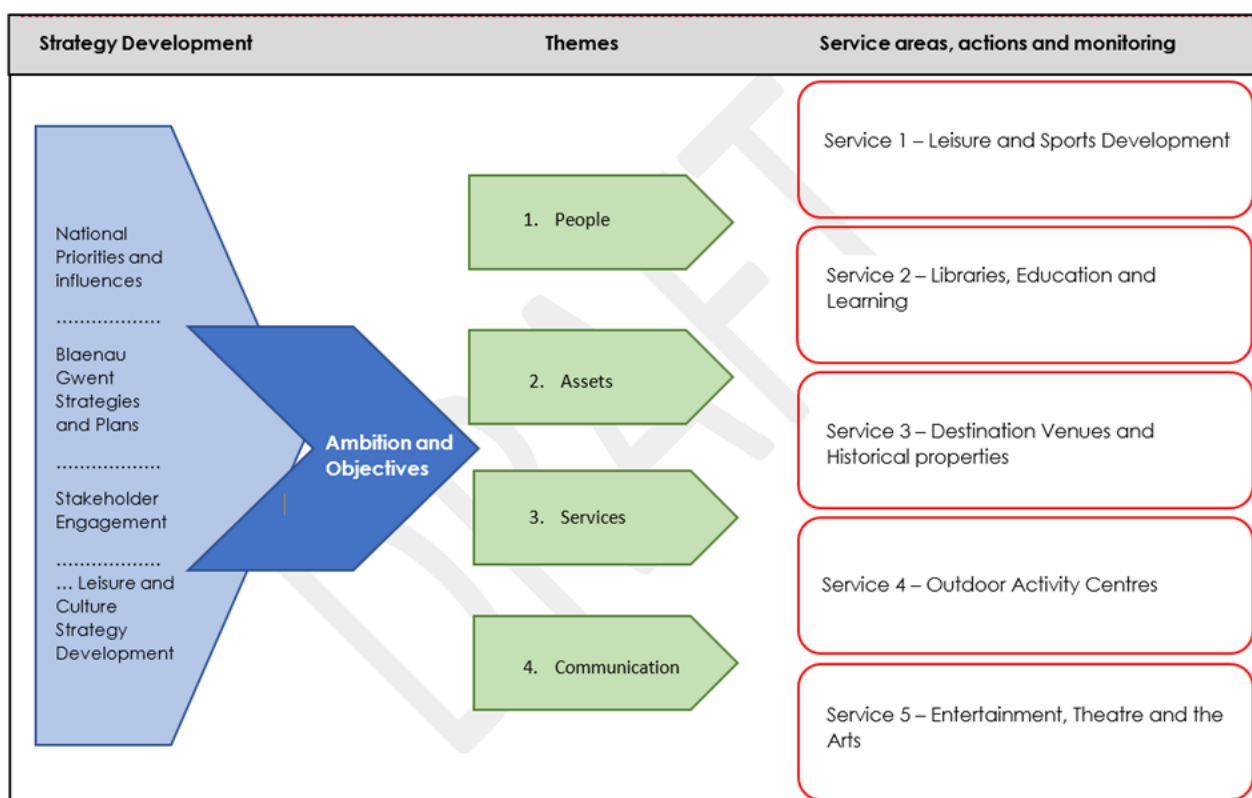
Services Included

Leisure and Sports Development

Residents of Abertillery, Ebbw Vale and Tredegar have direct access to affordable and accessible sports facilities and services. These include a wide range of facilities, programmes and services provided by a local charitable community Trust called Aneurin Leisure Trust.

The Trust operates three leisure centres, all are located within school sites.

Ebbw Vale Leisure Centre was built in 2013 and is considered the flagship site for the County Borough, while the two school sites provide community-based activities, which include swimming alongside a range of indoor and outdoor sports facilities delivered via artificial grass pitches, fitness suites, sports halls and studios.

Tredegar Sports Centre is a welcoming and accessible community sports facility that focusses on group bookings, clubs and societies. The centre has many sports activities and classes run by qualified instructors. Tredegar Sports Centre is the oldest of the sites and will require significant investment if it is to remain open as it is nearing the end of its useful life an assessment will need to be undertaken. Servicing a population catchment of just 19,000 it may not be possible to maintain the facility in its current form over the term of this strategy.

Abertillery Sports Centre has a more modern mix of facilities than Tredegar also in a local community setting and acts as the main hub for sport in the area. The centre has many sports and activities and includes an impressive outdoor full size 3G pitch. Whilst the main building is in reasonable condition it does require some reinvestment within the period of this strategy to ensure that is remains a popular destination for local people.

Schools and colleges remain a priority for engagement with younger residents influencing long-term attitudes towards activity, behaviour and lifestyle patterns. Undoubtedly there is a need for a modern infrastructure to engage and inspire activity levels amongst younger residents.

The 21st Century Schools Programme is critical to achieving this aim and may provide a funding solution to the requirements of the school based provision on secondary school sites.

The Sports Development Service delivers a range of community programmes for target groups, which include disability sport programmes, exercise referral schemes (delivered through NERS), the Welsh Government Funded Free Swimming Initiative for over 60s and under 16s children, Dragon Sport targeting primary school children, Fit and Fed projects tackling deprivation impact during the school holidays alongside learning and employment opportunities through the Coaches for the Future Scheme.

Libraries, education and learning

The six libraries within Blaenau Gwent offer local communities a range of books across a selection of interest areas, including e-books and e-magazines, alongside educational, training and employment support services and workshops for people of all ages and abilities.

The libraries offer free wi-fi and computer access, with most libraries offering attractive IT rooms with ten or more computers and they provide a range of educational sessions to help customers get to grips with all the latest technologies.

While some of the libraries have had to be located into smaller venues in the last few years to facilitate reduced demands and decreasing service budgets, they continue to be supported by loyal community members and volunteers who expect these facilities to remain open to the local catchment area.

Other community groups make use of these community facilities to include Macmillan Cancer Support and the Adult and Community Learning (ACL) service, while local community groups house a number of local museum and historical pieces of local relevance in adjoining suites under a separate tenancy agreement.

What is clear is that during the period of this strategy there will be a continued need to work even more closely with local partners including identifying opportunities for service integration and co-location, building on the services current success.

Destination venues and historical properties

Bedwellty House and its surrounding 26-acre Parc in Tredegar dates back to 1822 when Samuel Homfray, Richard Fothergill and Matthew Monkhouse owned the Tredegar Iron Company and built this (now) historical attraction.

Following the decline of the iron industry both the Parc and House were gifted to the

Bedwellty Park Fountain at the side of Bedwellty House, 1951.

Bedwellty House in 1998.

Council to be utilised as a public Parc.

The history of Bedwellty House is linked to the early political career of Aneurin Bevan who was elected to Tredegar Urban District Council in 1922, spending much of his time in the Council Chamber within Bedwellty House, and later became the parliamentary candidate for Ebbw Vale in 1929.

When the Labour Party won the 1945 General Election Bevan was appointed as Secretary of State for Health. He is recorded as having said of the NHS, "All I am doing is extending to the entire population of Britain the benefits we had in Tredegar for a generation or more. We are going to 'Tredegar-ise' you."

The house and Parc are now open to the public and provide events spaces for weddings, conference, meetings and events as well as maintaining the historical base for the Tredegar Town Council Chambers and Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Registrar's department.

Bedwellty House presents a development opportunity and is considered one of the Councils best assets. The House, as well as the venue for local Town Council meetings is widely used by the local community including as a hub for dementia sufferers as well as a stroke society and healthy walks. More recently the venue is being used more for special events and weddings and has become the administrative headquarters for the Leisure Trust.

Outdoor activity centres and sports grounds

Parc Bryn Bach is set in 340 acres of natural idyllic grass and woodland with a stunning 36-acre lake at its heart. It is an ideal setting for a range of adventure activities for visitors and has developed a diverse activity experience and outdoor education learning programme delivered from the main visitor centre overlooking the lake.

The Parc exemplifies the rich and attractive wealth of outdoor recreational space available in and around the County Borough, which includes opportunities for cycling, camping, canoeing, walking, hiking, fishing and rock climbing to name a few.

There are many physical and social rewards attributable to outdoor activities, some goal-directed activities require physical and mental agility which provides by return a wealth of positive emotional and spiritually rewards including increased self-esteem and improved mental health.

Outdoor activities provide alternative forms of activity to formal leisure and sport activities housed within leisure centres, and are frequently used as a medium for education and team building.

Parc Bryn Bach is home to the Blaenau Gwent Scouts Group, the Model Boat Club and offers opportunities for further physical and service developments.

The Parc Bryn Bach has tremendous development potential which will be a key objective of the new Leisure and Culture strategy.

[Sports Ground information to be included]

Entertainment Theatre and the Arts

Originally the 'Metropole Theatre and Dance Hall', the 'Met' dates back to 1892 where it serviced a much larger community of 40,000 when coal mining was the core industry at that time. The venue was famous locally and drew in international names such as Charlie Chaplin. Over the years the mining industry disappeared, and the town's prosperity declined, so the venue was used as an indoor market and later a cinema. In the late 1990's the Met fell into disrepair and the building had to close due to structural problems.

The Met Theatre reopened in 2007 following a major refurbishment, funded by the Welsh Assembly Government. The 216 seat Victorian theatre exudes character with restored Victorian grandeur, original timber roof structures imported from Canada, iron columns and decorative panels, the Met delivers a range of diverse programmes that include dramas. musical theatre shows, rock and pop music events and children's theatrical performances.

The Met is now a leading arts and cultural hub for shows and performances with the Arts Development Service operating from the venue, it has become a place for meetings and conferences and home to the 'Head for Arts' programme which the Arts Council consider to be an exemplar model for successful collaborative community Arts programming across the Heads of the Valley's area.

The building's excellent facilities and place within the Community were recognised by the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors who awarded the 'Building Which Most Benefits A Community' all-Wales award in 2008.

All staff at the Met are Dementia Friendly Trained and the venue is completely accessible to every member of the community.

The Arts Development Service is almost entirely grant funded to deliver community-based arts and wellbeing activities.

In these continuing times of austerity, it is beholden on the Arts Development and Theatre teams to ensure all commercial generating activities are explored, and that the service deficit is minimised over the course of the next 10 years. This will not be an easy objective given the size and scale of the theatre operation in Blaenau Gwent. However inward investment, commercial support in the form of corporate sponsorship and service developments to include increased catering provision could enhance the customer experience and improve bottom line performance, enhancing and not detracting from the already exceptional work being carried out by the local team.

The Beaufort Theatre in Ebbw Vale and Market Hall Cinema have been transferred to local Community Groups. These venues still play a significant role for their respective communities and are included in the strategy to ensure that the future of these venues can be secured as a community based cultural service and also to encourage ongoing partnership working between individual community cultural providers.

The Beaufort theatre offers a 338-seater auditorium and Ballroom. The theatre is also host to nine voluntary arts organisations who present annual productions there.

5. LEISURE AND CULTURE MAP

1. Parc Bryn Bach
2. Tredegar Library
3. Bewellty House and Park
4. Tredegar Sports Centre
5. Rassau Resource Centre
6. Beaufort Theatre and Ballroom
7. Brynteg Youth and Community Education Centre
8. Ebbw Vale Learning Action Centre
9. Ebbw Vale Library
10. Ebbw Vale Sports Centre - Inspire Team Base
11. Cwm Library
12. Brynmawr Library
13. Brynmawr Learning Action Centre

14. Blaina Library
15. Blaina Learning Action Centre
16. Abertillery Sports Centre
17. Abertillery Learning Action Centre
18. Abertillery Library
19. The Met, Abertillery

6. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

We consulted and engaged with a number of key local stakeholders and partner organisations in developing this strategy, including:

- Aneurin Leisure Trust;

- Tai Calon Social Housing;

- MALD (Museums, Archives & Libraries Division);

- CADW Historic Environment Service;

- The Local Health Board; and

- Local schools.

This section summarises the key messages from these partners. There is further detail about the stakeholder engagement in Appendix 1.

Key messages from some of our partners:

- A number of partners said that they would like to work more closely with the council, to have more formal partnership arrangements in place, including meeting and reporting mechanisms.

- Partners highlighted the potential for future joint working and collaboration on projects as part of a multi-agency approach to delivering services in the future.

- The importance of volunteering was mentioned by a number of partners; with some organisations able to offer training and support for staff and volunteers and some suggesting the idea of reward programme to encourage volunteers.

- Partners would be keen to integrate health and community facilities into new developments in the future to achieve good health and well-being outcomes. (housing, arts)

- Partners mentioned the value of invest to save projects so that capital ideas could be progressed and implemented. Strong internal processes will be needed to support contract management.

- Marketing, social media presence and communications systems such as online bookings and databases were mentioned by a number of partners, and some are keen to work together to improve marketing.

- The possibility of sharing of some other central resources such as HR and IT were also mentioned by some partners.

- Partners are keen to mentor young people into employment and training.

- The housing company is concerned with the fitness and health of young people.

- Partners wish to keep their staff fit and healthy and the housing company is concerned with the health and well-being of tenants and keeping people safe in their homes for longer is a priority

- The cost of taking part in leisure is an issue for the client groups of some partners

- There is a need for more safe outdoor play areas - particularly in relation to social housing - and the housing company would be keen to create more community gardens and play areas on the outdoor spaces on their existing developments (funding would be needed).

- There is a need to review dual use arrangements with schools, which aren't felt to work very well, and more dialogue with the headteachers forum is important.

- There is a need to rationalise or reconfigure the library service to make it more sustainable. A strong volunteer base will be needed, and friends' groups should be explored.

- Some partners would like to explore partnering with other cultural trusts in order to deliver joint programming and gain economies of scale and strategic alliances.

- Partners were keen that asset maintenance should be better planned in the future.

- Partners were keen to work together to plan and aspire for the future, and not let past performance be an inhibitor to future achievements.

We are very grateful to all our partner organisations who contributed to the development of the strategy and look forward to working together to deliver the strategy over the next ten years.

7.   OUR AMBITION

Our Ambition

Our ambition for the Leisure and Culture Strategy is to set out the council and its partners' aspirations, direction and priorities for leisure and culture over the next ten years, with a focus on deliverable priorities over the next five-year period.

It is intended to develop the leisure and culture offer already available to residents and visitors across the borough, to increase the number of people engaged in the range of services and involved in the delivery of leisure and culture opportunities, and to increase the profile and importance of leisure and culture participation for all members of the community.

> 'By 2024 Blaenau Gwent aims to have established a strong reputation for collaborative working across a range of quality service delivery models, that provide accessible leisure opportunities attracting high levels of participation to improve the happiness, mental health and physical wellbeing of residents and visitors alike'

Our Priorities

1.1. Increasing participation for all

1.2. Improving physical and mental health and well-being

1.3. Developing effective collaboration with partners

1.4. Maintaining and building upon the existing leisure and culture offer maximising opportunities

1. Increasing participation for all

By increasing participation rates in our leisure and culture services for all demographic groups, encouraging known groups with lower than average rates of participation, we will support growth and efficiency in an inclusive and sustainable manner, whilst at the same time reducing inequality and disadvantage.

We recognise that this will require some inward investment into the asset infrastructure, to provide an opportunity for increased usage and better maintenance of assets, to improve the financial performance that will support and offset those statutory services that inevitably are cost based only and less able to contribute to income targets.

2. Improving physical and mental health and well-being

We know from national research how important physical and mental health is ensure we live full and active lives. An active body and mind can often add years to people's lives.

By supporting initiatives from existing and future partners we can collectively help to increase activity levels across Blaenau Gwent and help in the prevention and management of many conditions and diseases including coronary heart disease, diabetes, cancer, and the growing issue of childhood obesity.

People can engage with leisure and culture in many different ways at every stage of their lives; and each encounter can have a positive impact upon health and wellbeing.

3. Developing effective collaboration with partners

Over the next five years we will continue to focus on more effective ways to deliver our services working, not just with the existing service providers, but with new people, organisations and local investors who can add benefit to the development of the local services and facilities for the enjoyment of all residents of Blaenau Gwent, along with visitors attracted the area.

Regular interaction between partners is essential to help ensure success however the Council does wish to retain influence over council led services, to ensure a consistency of approach, quality assurance and to facilitate the transparency of delivery that is fundamental to the success of the strategy.

We recognise the need to support and help to develop a network of volunteers and staff involved in delivering culture and leisure in Blaenau Gwent, and to help all individuals develop their talent, skills and confidence.

4. Maintaining and building upon the existing leisure and culture offer maximising opportunities

We live in a very challenging financial climate and working together is vital in maintaining existing provision in the most efficient manner. It is imperative therefore that the leisure and culture services become even more customer and business focussed over the period of this strategy to ensure that the commercial performance can be sustained long term and ultimately without any (or with significantly reduced) service subsidy from the Council.

There is much success to build upon following investment in leisure and culture in the past and we are committed to exploring further investment opportunities in our services in the future.

Delivery Themes

To deliver this vision we aspire to identify what we want, how we will get there and who will be involved. This has been captured within four overlapping themes across each service area as follows:

People — Service developments and innovation needed to meet the expectations of local people.

Assets — How assets will be managed and what investments will be needed over the next ten years.

Services — The services that will be provided including aspirations for the longer term.

Communication — How progress will be communicated to partners and residents and how it will be measured and reviewed.

Key Objectives

Whilst the strategy covers a ten year period from 2019 to 2029, over the first five years we plan to:

- Develop a financial sustainable plan for Leisure Services, in line with the requirements of the Council's medium-term financial strategy (MTFS);

- Explore invest to save initiatives to reduce revenue implications across our leisure and culture services;

- Review delivery options for Leisure and Culture Services;

- Initiate a fundamental review to modernise community library and learning provision;

- Undertake a review of future options for Tredegar Sports Centre:

- Secure investment in sports and cultural facilities via the 21st Century Schools Programme;

- Transfer responsibilities for sports grounds to local sports clubs by March 2019;

8. PARTNERSHIPS

The Council will focus during the period of this strategy on working with existing partners and facilitating effective new partnerships to provide the greatest impact increasing participation for all continuing to improve outcomes through our strategic partnerships framework shown below.
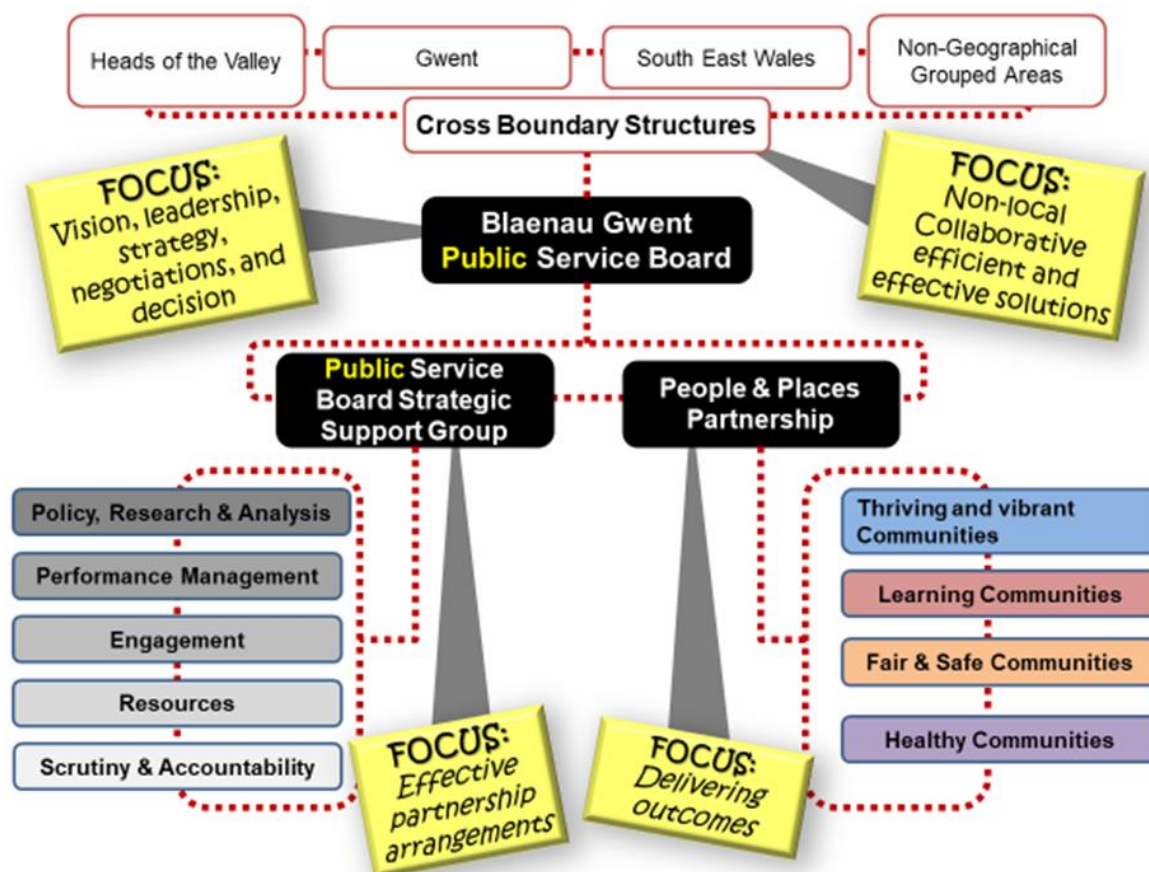
The Council current work with a range of partners:

- Natural Resources Wales were recommended as a partner to engage with by Future Generations Commission given the outdoor space available for recreation and leisure in Blaenau Gwent.

- GP surgeries for NERS referral programme - There are two Neighbourhood Care Networks (NCNs) in Blaenau Gwent. There are five practices which operate in the Blaenau Gwent East Cluster area

- Aneurin Trust local health board

- Valley Task Force (outdoor recreation, links to skills and prosperity)

- Neighbouring local authorities for partnerships in public bodies such as the Active Gwent Board that includes Caerphilly, Newport, Blaenau Gwent, Monmouthshire and Torfaen.

- Aneurin Leisure Trust

- The Future Generations commission local liaison office

- Arts Council Wales

- Wales Arts for Health Network

- The Welsh NHS Federation

In addition to this our delivery partner Aneurin Leisure currently work with a range of sport, culture, arts, and health organisations including:

- Chief Culture and Leisure Officers Wales Group – this focusses on all aspects of policy and strategic issues across leisure and culture.

- Gwent Chief Leisure Officer Group for Culture and Leisure – a collaboration with 5 Gwent LAs working very closely together to improve sports participation)

- Bookstart Cymru Strategic Board

- SCL (Society of Chief Librarians)

- Sporta South West and Wales Group

- Sporta UK HR Group

Anerin Leisure are also working with the Welsh Government Future Generations Commissioners Office on a potential collaboration across Arts.

Regional

- Heads of the Valleys Taskforce

- Coleg Gwent Franchise Group

- Head 4 Arts Development

- Integrated Autism Service Gwent

- Blaenau Gwent

- Blaenau Gwent Public Service Board Strategic Steering Group

- Blaenau Gwent Integrated Partnership Board (Health related)

- Blaenau Gwent Poverty Implementation Group

- Neighbourhood Cluster networks of general Practitioners * 2 in Blaenau Gwent

- DISP (Digital Inclusion Strategic Group)

- EYDCPP (Early Years Blaenau Gwent)

- Age Cymru/Carers Group

Memberships:

- Sporta South West and Wales

- Arts & Business Cymru

- IoD Wales

- South Wales Chamber of Commerce

9. MANAGING PERFORMANCE AND RISK

It is important that people can see what progress the Council is making against the priorities outlined in this Strategy and hold us properly to account.

We recognise that to maintain and improve opportunities for local residents, it is important to monitor our performance and manage the overall delivery of the strategy key actions.

To monitor performance, a set of specific indicators will be developed. The indicators and targets will need to be agreed with key partners and set in accordance with some of the additional research planned (mapping and auditing), ensuring targets take account of baseline (current position) and ensuring they can be realistically achieved.

The monitoring of the strategy will take place using the council's corporate performance management framework. Once developed, the indicators and actions will be included as part of the delivery plan for leisure and culture.

The overall monitoring of the strategy delivery, and agreed indicators will take account of:

INPUTS - resources being invested in the service, activities, and the services being provided with this resource;

OUTPUTS - including numbers of users, and outcomes of what is being achieved.

To align with the council's corporate performance management framework the strategy will be monitored quarterly, reporting as appropriate.

Monitoring and review is very much an ongoing process to inform decisions and shape changes to delivery, as opposed to a reflection at the end of delivery.

Regular reporting will include a report on progress overall, with a designation of 'red', 'amber' or 'green' status, and a review of reasons for divergence from agreed targets.

The monitoring and reviewing process will involve collecting and collating data from the following areas:

• Strategy review meetings;

• Residents opinions from corporate consultation exercises and leisure related surveys;

• Financial and attendance management data relating to formal facilities and programmes;

• National data (such as the Sport Wales Active Wales Survey);

• Consultation with delivery staff;

- Relevant evidence and data from key partners; and

- Monitoring returns submitted to external funders

An annual strategy review report will be produced to outline overall progress and key changes to agreed actions.

Also, it is vital that those employed within these services understand how their contribution to achieving our shared priorities is valued and the positive impact they can have on people's lives through the effective and efficient delivery of services.

It is essential that during the next ten years service providers demonstrate a range of good practice outcomes to future generations set alongside the strategy objectives. We need to be pushing the boundaries of the possible each year and enhancing the collaborations that take place locally to enhance lives and support community cohesion and wellbeing.

Moving forwards we will also introduce measurements demonstrating the impact of leisure and culture on the socio-economic lifestyles of the local community.

Risk

There are some significant risks associated with delivery of the leisure and culture strategy which will be regularly updated and reviewed:

- Impact on culture – cuts are affecting non-statutory services such as culture and leisure facilities the most, creating a barrier to cultural participation - with children in deprived communities missing out the most. At a time when the creative industries sector is rapidly expanding this could have a detrimental impact on the future growth of the sector and damage potential employment opportunities for young people in these industries[6]

- Competition from other local leisure and culture destinations;

- Consequences of the economic challenge facing future generations;

- Impact on income - poverty in Wales is higher than UK average, and rates have stayed the same for the past 12 years;

- Impact on affordability of products and services - 23% of households in Wales, about 291,000 households, live in fuel poverty;

- Impact on health - people who experience poverty or who live in deprived areas have fewer years of life free from illness or disability and are likely to die sooner. According to Public Health Wales obesity is more prevalent in areas where people experience poverty, and more adults die as a result of smoking and alcohol misuse in these areas compared to the least deprived areas. Unemployment, especially long-term unemployment, is also a contributing factor towards mental health conditions in adults (24%), smoking (43%), physical inactivity (60%). Even more worryingly it increases mortality rate by 20-25% in the 10 years following the loss of a job

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[6] Future Generations Report

- Impact on children – 29% of children live in poverty. Children in low-income households have poorer mental and physical health and achieve worse school results than those in better-off families, increasing the risk of staying in poverty across generations. They are also at greater risk of multiple Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) which can lead to greater likelihood of health-harming behaviours during their lives, and affecting the life chances of the next generation;

- Growing skills gap – there is likely to be an increase in the skills gap as professional and managerial jobs grow and semi and unskilled jobs reduce, leading to intense competition for jobs. For children and young people growing up in poverty they will be most affected as they are at risk of achieving poor educational results, have lower skills and aspirations, and are also more likely to be low paid, unemployed and welfare dependent in adulthood;

- Cost of providing services – Wales' high levels of poverty and social need mean we are spending £3.6 billion every year to provide services that deal with the social consequences through the health, education, social care and criminal justice systems. This means £1 in every £5 of spending on public services is poverty-related and impacts on equalities. Children, lone parent families, women, disabled people, people from non-white ethnicities, asylum seekers and refugees are all at a greater risk of poverty than the rest of the population. Therefore, a failure to address the drivers of poverty will continue to have an un-equalising effect on Welsh society;

10. CONSULTATION

In accordance with the Future Generations Act, following the completion of the draft strategy a wider consultation process will take place for feedback and final collaboration on the completion of the leisure and culture strategy. This consultation process will include a number of strategic partners alongside local community users and groups that are involved in achieving the well-being goals and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the strategy. Once this consultation is completed the final strategy will be put forward for approval by the Council Executive and Scrutiny Committees.

We welcome any feedback you might have about the Leisure and Culture Strategy 2019 - 2029. If there is any information you think could be considered for, or if you require this document in a different format e.g. large print, Braille, audio version, etc please contact us using the information below.

References

In Final Strategy

Appendix 1 – Draft Delivery Plan

Delivery Plan Overview

The Council already adopts a mixed model of delivery – directly delivering some services while for others Alternative Delivery Models have been established. For example, traditional Leisure, Culture and Learning Services are now delivered across Blaenau Gwent by a Charitable Trust limited by guarantee. The amount of services the Council directly delivers may decrease further depending on the future financial position. In time, the Council may act as a commissioner of services ensuring that they are responsive to local needs, centred around the person and community based. It will also look to become a more commercial organisation which generates income and delivers cost reductions. This in turn will help to make local services more sustainable and raise money to re-invest in our priorities[7].

In some instances, it might be appropriate for the Council to move into more of an enabling role supporting community groups and social enterprises to gain the skills and competencies to be able to retain and deliver services locally themselves (i.e. Community Asset Transfers). The council will also look to deliver services in collaboration with other councils in the future. There will also be a role for the Council in developing a renewed sense of place in the area and building pride in the borough, which could involve influencing and supporting partner organisations to work to common goals to meet the needs and aspirations of the community. The Council's role over time may be less about doing things to and for residents and communities and more about creating the capacity, interest, expertise and enthusiasm for individuals and communities to do things for themselves[8].

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[7] Services in the future extract from Corporate Plan 2018-2023
[8] Services in the future extract from Corporate Plan 2018-2023

Delivery Plan – Service Wide

Theme	Priority	Objectives	Outcomes
People	Developing effective collaboration with partners	• Formalise existing relationships with key partners and identify future partners ensuring that the leisure and culture agenda is represented.	
	Maintaining and building upon existing leisure and culture offer maximising opportunities.	• Develop the volunteer programme across the services creating incentives and a rewards programme to support volunteer commitments in support of the future sustainability of services.	
	Developing effective collaboration with partners	• To facilitate appropriate governance arrangements to support the implementation of the strategy we will focus on identification and support of key community advocates such as community group leaders, local clubs and associations.	
	Increasing participation for all	Grow a skilled and passionate workforce by: • Developing an effective apprenticeship programme that works across all service areas and provides skilled work	

		for school leavers and those in NEET. • Creating a skills development programme to further enhance employee skills in customer service standards, health and safety, tourism and marketing, so that every member of staff is able to engage with and cross promote services. • To achieve the Gold standard "Insport" gradings for the Councils inclusive work. Blaenau Gwent are currently averaging a Bronze Standard.	
Assets	Maintaining and building upon existing leisure and culture offer maximising opportunities.	Local People Managing Local Services: • We will work with communities where there is interest for communities to take greater control of leisure and culture assets and encourage improvement of facilities under their ownership/management.	Protecting important local assets and services. 'Local people managing local services'.
	Maintaining and building upon existing leisure and culture offer maximising opportunities.	• Investigate opportunities for co-location and service integration within the leisure and culture service.	Improved efficiency of delivering community services.
	Increasing participation for all	• Provide inward investment into maintaining and enhancing existing and new leisure facilities by establishing an asset invest to save protocol with our partners.	Improved efficiency of delivering community services to support further targeted intervention where higher levels of subsidy are required.

	Maintaining and building upon existing leisure and culture offer maximising opportunities.	• Identify capital investment and operational efficiency opportunities to improve the financial performance of the leisure and cultural facilities. • Establish an annual planned preventative maintenance programme seeking to reduce our carbon footprint. • Continue to invest in inclusivity developments to ensure access to services is available to all. • Identify co-location and service integration opportunities through collaboration with local service delivery partners.	
	Maintaining and building upon existing leisure and culture offer maximising opportunities.	• Development of a carbon reduction programme across the assets and share best practise with partner organisations.	Reduced cost of running the service.
Services	Improving physical and mental health	• Accessing harder to reach communities and target groups BME/Women/Teenage girls through the relationship with the Social Services Department based at Parc Bryn Back, delivering cultural and leisure programmes with the local social housing group.	
	Improving physical and mental health and wellbeing	• We will promote active travel with strong linkages with the local transport to provide more active and sustainable means.	

	Increasing participation for all	• We will make the most out of digital opportunities to improve access to services.	
	Increasing participation for all	• We will work to remove the barriers to accessing facilities and activities though targeted pricing and free taster sessions.	
Communications	Increasing participation for all	• We will facilitate improved co-ordination, signposting and linkages between our partners ensuring the wealth of information currently available is provided efficiently and via multiple sources including social media channels, celebrating and raising awareness of our collective successes.	
	Increasing participation for all	• We will ensure that marketing and communications are embedded as a central element to the delivery of our priorities aligning to national and local leisure and cultural events and campaigns to maximise their impact across Blaenau Gwent.	
	Increasing participation for all	• We will capture and disseminate opportunity data (the what, when, where of physical activity sessions) to ensure lack of information is not a barrier to participation.	

Delivery Plan – Leisure and Sports Development

Themes	Priority	Objectives	Outcomes
People	Increasing participation for all	• Establishing Physical Literacy from an early age in nurseries, schools, community centres and leisure centres. • Affordable children's programmes and activities. • Delivery of Hooked on Sport Programmes and school sport programmes. • Dragon Sport participation • One More programmes delivered through secondary schools • Sports festival development • Improve the hooked on sports, school sports survey results year on year.	Measurement of success against 'Sport Wales' national performance framework outcomes: 1. Children doing three occasions of sport in a week (extracurricular and within the wider community setting) 2. Increase in Club membership. 3. 16-24 adult participation (three occasions per week) 4. School key stage 3 attainment; 5. Number of Adults volunteering in Wales.
Assets	Maintaining and building upon existing leisure and culture offer maximising opportunities. Maintaining and building upon existing leisure and culture offer maximising opportunities.	• Review, with our key partners, future options for Tredegar Sports Centre. • Review the school use agreements with our partners to ensure they are still fit for purpose.	• Improved efficiency in delivery of services. • Improved health and wellbeing for the community.

Services	Increasing participation for all	• Provide informal places for activity including continued development of street games and the young ambassador programme. • Provide affordable children's programmes and activities. • Deliver 'Hooked on Sport' Programmes and school sport programmes. • Deliver 'Dragon Sport' and 'One More' programmes in secondary schools. • Sports festival development • Further develop health referral services. • Further develop health referral services.	•
Communications	Increasing participation for all	• Transparency of performance information	
	Maintaining and building upon existing leisure and culture offer maximising opportunities.	• Enhanced and targeted marketing for each leisure centre • On-line joining functionality for memberships • Online booking functionality for classes and courses	
	Maintaining and building upon existing leisure and culture offer maximising opportunities.	• Increased social media engagement with local community members creating referrals and increased participation.	

Delivery Plan – Libraries, Education and Learning Development

Themes	Priority	Objectives	Outcomes
People	Increasing participation for all	• Introduce a volunteer led project reading to socially isolated or vulnerable people in the community on a regular basis	• Improved health and wellbeing targeting vulnerable people.
Assets	Maintaining and building upon existing leisure and culture offer maximising opportunities.	• Review co-location and service integration opportunities	•
Services	Increasing participation for all	• Continue to deliver the positive programmes to tackle social exclusion, inactivity through the Active Gwent Board and aim to widen the impact across the County Borough.	•
Communications	Increasing participation for all	• Focus on becoming a 'Go to' provider of digital support in the community' through ongoing investment in modern equipment.	• Increase use and access to the service.
	Increasing participation for all	• Develop a coordinated approach to marketing by working with our partners and focussing on improvement in joint initiatives and digital	

		communication such as social media.	

Delivery Plan – Destination Venues and Historical Properties

Themes	Priority	Objectives	Outcomes
People	Increasing participation for all	• Develop the volunteer programme	•
Assets	Maintaining and building upon existing leisure and culture offer maximising opportunities.	• Review internal and external commercial options for investment.	• Improved sustainability.
Services	Maintaining and building upon existing leisure and culture offer maximising opportunities.	• Develop the venue for more weddings and special events.	• Improved sustainability.
Communications	Maintaining and building upon existing leisure and culture offer maximising opportunities.	• Develop a more extensive events programme at the venue using the historical appeal and grounds to develop a rich cultural programme of activities for the community including concerts and picnics in the Parc, events and historical readings and plays	•

Delivery Plan – Outdoor Activity Centres and Sports Grounds

Themes	Overarching Aim	Objective	Outcomes
Assets	Maintaining and building upon existing leisure and culture offer maximising opportunities.	• Deliver CAT transfer of sports grounds in line with current Council policy.	•
Assets	Maintaining and building upon existing leisure and culture offer maximising opportunities.	• To enhance the natural appeal of Bryn Bach Parc (and others) protecting and developing the natural resources and utilising these as active recreation opportunities to get more people active	•
	Maintaining and building upon existing leisure and culture offer maximising opportunities.	• To review commercial opportunities at Parc Bryn Bach as a 'leisure destination' attraction.	•
Services	Maintaining and building upon existing leisure and culture offer maximising opportunities.	• Social Services - continue to support the Centre of Excellence for Mental Health at Parc Bryn Bach	•
Communications	Maintaining and building upon existing leisure and culture offer maximising opportunities.	• Enhancing the promotion of Bryn Bach Pak to attract new visitors to the area as a destination venue	•
	Maintaining and building upon existing leisure and culture offer maximising opportunities.	• Develop the website and technology platform to enable online booking of activities in advance of arrival – to secure	•

		engagement from customers when sought	

Delivery Plan – Live Entertainment, Theatre and Arts Development

Themes	Priority	Objectives	Outcomes
People	Increasing participation for all	• Develop a co-ordinated approach to volunteering, ensuring it is more representative of the community including more students and those who are recently retired helping their transition into the third age.	• An appropriately skilled volunteer workforce complimenting existing paid staff is in place to support delivery of the strategy.
Assets	Increasing participation for all	• Continue to invest and develop facilities inclusively for all.	•
	Maintaining and building upon existing leisure and culture offer maximising opportunities.	• Confirm, following review, the future governance and management arrangements for the Metropole Theatre and Arts Centre.	•
Services	Maintaining and building upon existing leisure and culture offer maximising opportunities.	• 'Head for Arts' Programme development	•
Communications	Maintaining and building upon existing leisure and culture offer maximising opportunities.	• Introduce a ' Metropole User Group' and utilise the wider Leisure Trust customer database to promote events.	•

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ANEURIN LEISURE TRUST – REVIEW OF SLAs 2019/2020

Service Level Agreements are in place between the Council and the Trust for the areas listed below. All are reviewed on an annual basis.

1. Accountancy (Including VAT Advice and Support – 7 days, Leasing / General Ledger Support – 2 Days, Grant Administration – 3 days)

2. Creditors

3. Legal Services

4. Procurement

5. Procurement

6. E-Purchasing

7. Information Governance

8. Print Room

9. Courier

10. Health & Safety

11. Payroll

12. Technical Services

13. ICT

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BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BROUGH COUNCIL AND ANUERIN LEISURE

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP GROUP

1. BACKGROUND

By 2025 Blaenau Gwent aims to have established a strong reputation for collaborative working across a range of quality service delivery models that provide accessible leisure opportunities attracting high levels of participation to improve the happiness, mental health and physical well-being of residents and visitors alike.

The terms of reference for the Strategic Partnership Group have been developed from the Council's current Service Specification for Leisure and Sport, Outdoor Activity Centre's, Destination Venues, Libraries and Adult Community Learning.

> The Operator shall commit to the philosophy and recognise the importance of working collaboratively with the Council in delivering the Services through the development of the governance structure which is focused around a commissioning approach with regular meetings between the Council and the Operator.

Overarching Service Priorities

All service priorities included within the Council's Leisure and Culture Strategy are set out below.

   a) Increasing participation for all;

   b) Improving physical and mental health and wellbeing;

   c) Developing effective collaboration with partners; and

   d) Maintaining and building upon the existing leisure and culture offer maximising opportunities

The Council's Delivery Themes

All service delivery should support the delivery of the Council's Leisure and Culture Strategy set out below.

> 1. **PEOPLE** – Providing service developments and innovation needed to meet the expectations of local people.
>
> 2. **ASSETS** – Managing assets and providing investment opportunities.
>
> 3. **SERVICES** – Developing services including supporting the Council's long-term aspirations.
>
> 4. **COMMUNICATION –** Providing progress against the Council's priorities and key objectives.

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The Council's Key Objectives

The Council's key objectives as set out in its Leisure and Cultural Strategy are included in the table below.

1. The Council's Leisure and Culture Strategy covers a 10-year period 2019-2029, over the first five years the Council require the operator to support delivery of their key objectives:

2. Develop a financial sustainable plan for Leisure Services, in line with the requirements of the Council's medium-term financial strategy (MTFS);

3. Provide invest to save initiatives to reduce revenue implications across our leisure and culture services.

4. Initiate a fundamental review to modernise community library and learning provision.

5. Undertake a review of future options for the Sports Centre; and

6. Secure investment in sports and cultural facilities via available funding opportunities including the 21st Century Schools Programme.

2. AUTHORITY AND PURPOSE

The purpose of the Strategic Partnership Group is to support delivery of the Leisure and Culture Strategy 2019-2029 of a 'Better Place to Live and Work' with a focus but not limited to the following:

- Progress against the Operator's Business Plan.
- Progress by the Operator against Council Priorities and contribution towards Strategic Outcomes.
- Operator's Financial Performance.
- Joint service improvement opportunities.
- Variations to contract and commissioning opportunities.
- Other matters of a strategic nature considered appropriate for discussion by the Group.

3. MEMBERSHIP

Chair - The group to be chaired by the local authority, established by the parties within one month of contract commencement.

In addition to the Chair, the Strategic Partnership Group will comprise of the following:

Organisation	Designation
Council	Leader
Council	Portfolio Holder
Council	Managing Director
Council	Corporate Director of Education
Council	Council's Client Function – Lead Officer
Operator	Operator Chair
Operator	Vice Chair
Operator	Executive Director (1)
Operator	Executive Director (2)

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Either the Operator or Local Authority, subject to the agreement of the other party, may also invite appropriate third parties to attend part of the Strategic Partnership meetings to help it understand an issue or decision.

4. FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

The Strategic Partnership Board will normally meet bi-annually or more frequently, as the Chair deems necessary, to fulfil the obligations and duties.

5. QUORUM

A minimum number of 50% of the partnership group members are required for decision-making purposes. The quorum must include either the Leader or Portfolio Holder of the Council and Chair or Vice Chair of the operator.

6. REPORTING TO COUNCIL'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEES AND EXECUTIVE CABINET

Progress reports will be provided to Education Scrutiny Committee and Executive on an agreed basis.

The Strategic Partnership Group will have sight of the reports and be able to provide feedback.

As a minimum the Strategic Partnership Group shall report to Council on an annual basis

7. REVIEW OF TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Strategic Partnership Group will review its terms of reference and effectiveness annually, including a review of membership and implement any changes it considers necessary.

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Executive Committee and Council only
Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A
Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: N/A

Committee: **Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **3rd November 2020**

Report Subject: **Education Directorate-Response to COVID-19**

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

Report Submitted by: **Interim Corporate Director for Education, Lynn Phillips**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	**Corporate Leadership Team**	**Portfolio Holder / Chair**	**Audit Committee**	**Democratic Services Committee**	**Scrutiny Committee**	**Executive Committee**	**Council**	**Other (please state)**
1.10.20	8.10.20	19.10.20			3.11.20	09.02.20		

1. **Purpose of the Report**
1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Members with an opportunity to scrutinise the Education Directorate's response to the COVID-19 situation, particularly supporting the schools during the emergency period.

2. **Scope and Background**
2.1 Members will be aware that the Interim Corporate Director of Education provided a verbal update to Scrutiny Committee at the meeting in September regarding the response to the COVID-19 emergency. However, this report provides the background, context and a current view of the response, in particular how the Council has and will continue to support schools during the pandemic.

The Welsh Government Minister for Education, Kirsty Williams MS, outlined the national approach for the return of children and young people to schools in Wales on Wednesday 3rd June 2020. The approach involved schools in Wales reopening on June 29th 2020. Welsh Government advocated a phased return to schools, supporting pupils to check in and catch-up with a focus on wellbeing, whilst also continuing with distance and online learning in and around school-based sessions.

2.2 **School Communication and Operations**
The reopening of schools in Blaenau Gwent was managed in conjunction with corporate colleagues and schools. There are robust reporting arrangements on Education matters to GOLD via the Emergency Response Team (ERT) protocols. Furthermore, Education has established two Executive School Planning Groups - one for the secondary sector inclusive of special schools, along with one for the primary sector inclusive of Welsh-medium provision. The aim of these groups is to oversee the development of a common framework and principles within which the reopening of schools can be implemented. During the summer term, the secondary sector including middle schools were operational between the hours of 9:00am and 12:30pm. The primary sector was operational between the hours of 9:00am

and 12:00pm Pen-y-Cwm Special School was operational between the hours of 9:00am and 3:00pm, due to travel times and distance from home to school. This approach enabled two key aims to be delivered:

- The aim of the model was to ensure where practicably possible, that pupils had at least 3 opportunities to check in and catch-up during the summer term.
- Schools established maximum engagement opportunities for key year groups such as years 10, 9, 6 and 5 to catch-up and check in.

2.3 **Facilities, Health & Safety and School Support Services**

Technical facilities assessments were undertaken in preparation for reopening to assess physical works and adaptations. In addition, a comprehensive water testing, management and mitigation programme was established and monitored by Education, Technical Services, Health & Safety and Environmental Health. There has been a subsequent Scrutiny Committee meeting that dealt with the water testing issues experienced within schools. Some of the key work carried out from a facilities management and support services perspective included:

- Pupil capacity assessments and facilities planning sessions were programmed to inform the operational plans for each school including: maximum pupil numbers and grouping; operational layout, set-up and systems i.e. one way; room usage; decant and resource management requirements.
- Guidance was provided to schools regarding the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in general, for first aid, medical, intimate care and other purposes. Additionally, there were other resource requirements i.e. signage, spill kits etc. that were identified on a school by school basis.
- An enhanced cleaning service specification and associated guidance was produced and introduced across the school estate.
- The provision of direct payments to families eligible for Free School Meal (eFSM) circa 2,200+ learners.
- A reopening risk assessment template, guidance and example were produced and shared with headteachers. These template documents were then adapted by school leaders and validated by the Council. All school based risk assessments were deemed to be suitable and sufficient.
- Education and Health & Safety colleagues visited all school sites in order to review the reopening plans, risk assessments and to undertake Environmental Health based assessments ensuring compliance with key legislation.

2.4 **School Improvement**

The focus has clearly been on supporting a safe return to school for learners and staff, however, throughout each phase of the pandemic the range of support to schools has flexed in order to respond to emerging learner and school improvement needs. The EAS, the commissioned school improvement service has worked closely with the Council, school leaders, staff and governors to support the identified needs. A high-level summary of

the extensive work that is ongoing to support schools is detailed below, but clearly this is not an exhaustive list:

- Providing timely communication and access to virtual networks for school settings and governors, in line with the Welsh Government's Continuity of Learning Plan (CoLP);
- Supporting adaptive and innovative leadership to manage change;
- Providing bespoke leadership support to schools and settings with a focus on self-evaluation, quality assuring current provision and planning for return;
- Providing wellbeing resources and guidance materials, particularly to support remote and blended learning;
- Continuing to provide a range of professional learning that meets the needs of the entire workforce (and governors) over the 2020-21 academic year; and,
- Support for circa 1,400 digitally disadvantaged learners with funding of £600,000+ support from the EdTech initiative.

2.5 **Home to School Transport**

Education determined that transport provision would be required in consideration of availability and safe operation. Education requested that schools who have transport provision in place in line with the Council's Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy, provide the Council with their school operation plan and pupil transport priorities, based on the following criteria:

- Distance from home to school;
- The needs of disabled learners and learners with learning difficulties;
- Any particular needs of learners who are 'looked after' or formerly looked after by a Council;
- The age of a learner; and,
- The nature of the route that the learner is expected to take between home and the places where they receive education or training.

Pupils from 15 schools within Blaenau Gwent are currently eligible for transport in line with the Council's policy, along with pupils from 12 schools/specialist education facilities outside of the County Borough. The Council was able to fully meet the transport requirements identified by schools within and outside of the County Borough.

2.6 **Key Worker Childcare, Vulnerable Learners and Youth Services**

The Council's approach to the re-purposing of schools has provided childcare for over 500 critical workers throughout the course of the last 6 months, via school childcare hubs and/or private childcare provision. 377 children have accessed a key worker childcare place at a school hub between March and early July 2020. School hub attendance increased throughout the summer term to over 140 children and young people per day across 7 school childcare hubs. The percentage split was 83% key worker and 17% vulnerable children and young people.

The Youth Service also supported young people throughout the emergency period in both school and community settings. The team liaised with

secondary schools regarding support for school-age young people on a weekly basis along with the following key activities:

- o Providing emotional wellbeing support for young people.
- o Emergency support for young people in crisis, including the provision of food.
- o Resources to support Elective Home Educated (EHE) young people and families in line with requests.
- o Reviewing the 'stay at home' campaign with vulnerable 18-25 year olds (liaising with local partners such as Gwent Police).
- o Providing support for young people experiencing homelessness issues.

2.7 **Whole School Re-opening - September 2020**

More recently, the Council's corporate response has focussed on preparing for all of our learners returning to whole school environments. The Blaenau Gwent Whole School Re-opening Guidance (Appendix 1) document outlines the local approach and is a key source of reference for implementation in schools. It provided schools with a strategic framework for a safe and effective return to whole school working. It continues to be a dynamic emergency response situation, and therefore, the Council will continue to work with the schools to review the planning arrangements and amend the guidance accordingly e.g. the use of face masks and social distancing requirements. A summary of the main considerations that are pertinent to the whole school re-opening is provided below;

- Blaenau Gwent has adopted a strategic approach to whole school re-opening (September 2020) for consistency purposes;
- School Planning Groups for secondary, primary and special schools are established, including Headteacher representation;
- Re-opening from 1st September involved a common approach across the school estate;
  - 2 planning days.
  - 2 transitional year group planning days.
  - Whole school reopening from the 7th September (WG expectation 14th September).
- Re-opening has been relatively successful e.g. pupil attendance is in range of 85%-90%, but pupil regression has been identified;
- School support services-cleaning regimes further enhanced, a flexible catering offer and transport in place;
- Blended learning in place for learners who are self-isolating through identification of positive cases;
- FSM direct payments will continue for learners not in school;
- Relatively stable position on school based workforce, however, increasing cases are being experienced amongst school based staff; and,
- Positive COVID-19 cases for pupils has resulted in some classes, year groups and one school closure on health and safety grounds.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

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

Option 1: to accept the report as presented.

Option 2: to scrutinise the information detailed within the report and contribute to the continuous assessment of effectiveness by making appropriate recommendations to the Executive Committee.

This report provides the Scrutiny Committee with important emergency response and statutory 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 One of the objectives in the Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan is for every child to have the best start in life. The Council seeks to ensure that provision is appropriate and able to meet the needs of children and young people, so that their progress is in line with ambitious expectations. This is particularly pertinent in an emergency crisis situation.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 **Impact on Budget**

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report, however, it should be noted that the impact of the COVID-19 emergency response on both Council and school revenue budgets is being closely monitored. The Education Directorate Q1 revenue budget monitoring report's position demonstrated a favourable variance circa £340,000, mostly attributable to the reduced provision of transport and out of county support for vulnerable learners. There are, however, some significant cost pressures that are being managed through school support services, such as cleaning, but there is WG Hardship funding available to offset aspects of the additional cost burdens at this point in time.

5.2 **Risk including Mitigating Actions**

There are two strategic risks associated with this report:

1. The impact of COVID-19 on learner progression and pupil regression. This is being mitigated through the Council, EAS and Schools working in collaboration to support learners across the board; and,
2. The risks associated with the provision of safe learning environments to minimise the potential transmission of COVID. There are comprehensive risk assessments in place to mitigate the risks, but the situation is constantly under review and appropriate remedial action is taken e.g. self-isolation protocols are implemented.

5.3 **Legal**
This report provides information relating to the emergency response requirements as well as the specific Education obligations set out the School Standards and Organisation Act Wales (2013) to support strategic and operational activity to improve pupil outcomes and wellbeing.

5.4 **Human Resources**
Colleagues in Organisational Development provide a weekly analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on the Education Directorate's workforce. There are increasing cases amongst the workforce, but this has resulted in only a limited impact on service delivery within schools at the time of drafting this report.

6. **Supporting Evidence:**
6.1 **Performance Information and Data**
Across the board, the emergency response from the Council and its schools has been strong and effective, especially in the following aspects of work:
- Re-purposing of schools – supporting children of key workers & vulnerable learners;
- Re-opening schools – from the 29th June 2020; and,
- Preparing for academic year 2020/21, particularly whole school re-opening from September 2020, in line with WG expectations.

6.2 **Expected outcome for the public**
There is a commitment from the Council and its schools to provide quality education for our children and young people to improve their life chances, despite the challenges faced during the emergency crisis.

6.3 **Involvement**
There has been extensive involvement of key stakeholder both corporately and across the school estate. The planning groups for secondary, primary and special schools that are established, including Headteacher representation has secured a collaborative and corporate response.

6.4 **Thinking for the Long term**
This report largely reflects on the emergency response to date, however, there a robust governance arrangements in place to support the next stages of the emergency for the foreseeable future.

6.5 **Preventative focus**
The Council's emergency response has facilitated a preventative approach to minimising the transmission of the COVID-19 virus.

6.6 **Collaboration / partnership working**
The report outlines the significant amount of partnership working at a strategic and operational level. This has resulted in a strengthening of the working relationships between the Council and the schools.

6.7 **Integration**
The emergency response has been a 'One Council' approach.

6.8 **EqIA**
There is no requirement for EQIA assessment since there only a limited change of policy and guidance associated with this report.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**
7.1 The report will be presented to the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee and then subsequently through to the Executive Committee for monitoring purposes.

8. **Background Documents / Electronic Links**
Appendix 1- Whole School Re-opening.

REF:

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Blaenau Gwent Guidance for Whole School Re-opening

Autumn-term 2020

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1. Introduction

1.1 Foreword

We would like to take this opportunity to introduce you to Blaenau Gwent's strategic full whole school re-opening planning document for the start of academic year 2020/21. Firstly, we need to express our appreciation to everyone for all your hard work, commitment and professionalism demonstrated over the academic year 19/20, but particularly during recent months in responding to the emergency response associated with COVID-19.

Across the board, the BG response from colleagues has been outstanding, especially in the following aspects of work recently: -

- Re-purposing of schools – supporting children of key workers & vulnerable learners;
- Re-opening schools – from the 29th June 2020; and,
- Preparing for academic year 2020/21, as we move to whole school re-opening in September 2020, in line with WG expectations.

It is now time, however, to prepare for all of our learners returning to a whole school environment. This document outlines the BG approach and will be a key source of reference for localised implementation in schools and will also provide a framework for a safe and effective return to whole school working. It has and continues to be a dynamic situation moving forward, and therefore, we will work with our schools to review the planning arrangements and this document accordingly.

We both look forward to working with all key stakeholders to continue to deliver quality educational provision for all of our learners in academic year 2020/21.

Interim Corporate Director of Education   Executive Member for Education

Lynn Phillips   Cllr Joanne Collins

1.2 Authority Support

The Council and its partners such as the Education Achievement Service, Shared Resource Service Wales etc. will be providing specific re-opening support to schools via:

- Weekly Executive School Planning Group meetings
- School re-opening site visits
- Risk assessment reviews
- Providing support and information on a daily/weekly basis
- Offering guidance which is frequently updated in line with the latest Welsh Government, Public Health Wales and local operational developments.

2. School Facilities

2.1 Capacities

The annual capacity assessment process will be undertaken earlier in the autumn term than in previous years. The primary focus will be the use of currently unused internal areas of the school building, in supporting schools to address spatial issues associated with the health, safety and welfare of staff and pupils. The secondary aspect of the assessment will focus on the capacity assessments for September 2022.

The Education Transformation team will work with school leaders to understand their facilities requirements and any associated adaptations which may be required. The review process will commence in late September and conclude in early October, in order to inform a programme of physical works throughout the autumn term.

2.2 Social Distancing, PHW Guidance and Environmental Health

Social Distancing

Having assessed their risk, schools, as far as reasonably possible must adapt to the social distancing guidance, adopting it in a way that works for their school, which allows them to deliver for all learners. If schools and settings follow the guidance set out within this document and the guidance provided by Welsh Government, they will effectively reduce risks in their school and create an inherently safer environment.

Please see the link to the latest operational guidance for schools and settings from the autumn term.

https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-08/operational-guidance-for-schools-and-settings-from-the-autumn-term-version-2.pdf

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The latest published evidence in relation to the transmissibility in learners under the age of 12 seems to be particularly low. However, minimising contacts and mixing between people to reduce transmission of COVID-19 is still important in all contexts. Schools and settings must consider how to best implement this while delivering a broad and balanced curriculum. It is acknowledged, however, that schools will have constraints relating to buildings and staffing resources and an element of flexibility may be needed.

The overarching principle to apply is reducing the number of contacts between learners and staff. This can be achieved through keeping groups separate and through maintaining distance between individuals. Both measures will help, but the balance between them will change depending on the:

- Learners' ability to distance
- Layout of the school
- Feasibility of keeping distinct groups separate while offering a broad curriculum (especially at secondary schools).

It is likely that for younger learners the emphasis will be on separating groups and for older learners it will be on social distancing. For learners old enough, they should be supported to maintain distance and not touch staff where possible.

Handwashing

It has been proven that handwashing is the number one preventative measure for reducing the risk of infection, it is vital that the recommended hand hygiene routine is implemented in schools and appropriate signage should be situated around the premises for the children and all staff members.

Hand Hygiene Routine.pdf

Hand Washing Techniques.pdf

Clean hands thoroughly, for at least 20 seconds and more often than usual.

Public Health Guidance emphasises the need to ensure that effective and frequent hand washing is an effective way of removing the virus from the hands. The Council will support schools to ensure that learners wash their hands regularly, including when they arrive at school, when they return from breaks, when they change rooms and before and after eating. Regular and thorough hand cleaning is going to be needed for the foreseeable future. Points to consider and implement include:

- Ensure that the school/setting has enough hand washing stations and/or hand sanitiser 'stations' available to ensure that all learners and staff can wash their hands regularly. Please contact Stuart Jones (Procurement) and Emma Jones (Education) should you need to replenish your sanitising station stock

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- Children, particularly younger ones, must be supervised whilst using hand sanitiser.
- Ensuring that young learners and those with complex needs effectively wash their hands and assistance provided in a safe manner
- Building these routines into the school's culture, supported by behaviour expectations and helping ensure younger learners and those with complex needs understand the need to follow them

Respiratory Hygiene

Catch it! Bin it! Kill it!

The 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach continues to be very important, so schools and settings must ensure that they have enough tissues and bins available in the school to support learners and staff to follow this routine. Please contact Stuart Jones (Procurement) and Emma Jones (Education) should your stock require replenishment. As with hand cleaning, schools and settings must ensure younger learners and those with complex needs are assisted to undertake this routine correctly. All learners *will need to* understand that this is now part of school life. Learners with complex needs may find it difficult to maintain good respiratory hygiene as effectively as their peers. This should be considered in whole school/individual risk assessments in order to support these learners and the staff working with them, and is not a reason to deny these learners face-to-face education.

What to do if a child or staff member becomes symptomatic

Schools must ensure that they have a designated room/area that is well ventilated and has a door with a window panel (if possible) that can be closed to ensure that isolation of a symptomatic person can occur immediately. Schools are to identify a designated toilet for use solely by a symptomatic person.

The main symptoms to look out for that may indicate the presence of coronavirus are:

- **A high temperature** – this means they feel hot to touch on their chest or back
- **A new, continuous cough** – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if they usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
- **A loss or change to their sense of smell or taste** – this means they will have noticed they cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal.

Please only follow the procedures below if any of the <u>symptoms above</u> are present

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If a ___staff member___ becomes symptomatic during the course of the session the following procedures should be followed:

- Any member of staff who develops symptoms will be required to go home immediately, as soon as symptoms present. If they cannot leave the school grounds immediately then they should isolate themselves to a dedicated room until they can safely leave the grounds. If at any time a staff member is struggling to breath and it is not safe for them to leave the school grounds they should be isolated and 111 or 999 called immediately for further medical assistance
- Staff should be advised to contact their GP to seek medical advice and to visit the gov.uk portal to arrange for a COVID-19 test
- School staff are reminded of the requirement of self-isolation and house hold isolation where required in line with COVID-19 guidelines.

If a ___Child___ becomes symptomatic during the course of the session the following procedures should be followed:

- Upon presenting with symptoms a member of staff is to ensure that the child is isolated in a safe space away from other pupils and staff (maintaining the social distancing requirements). Staff member to contact the parents/carers immediately and arrange collection of the child as soon as possible. In the interim the staff member responsible for the child's care will need to perform the hand hygiene routine explained in section 2.2 – Handwashing, and ensure that appropriate PPE is used (as per section 2.10).

- Schools must move the child to the identified isolation room in the school until they can be safely collected. Following collection of the child, the room and facilities used should be locked or clearly signposted as not to be used and left for as long as possible before cleaning. All equipment that requires cleaning should remain in the room and a sign displayed on the room not to enter until cleaning has been undertaken. The school must ensure that they inform the cleaning staff if this isolation room has been used and the areas where the symptomatic person has been within the school.

- The parents should be advised to contact their GP to seek medical advice and to visit the gov.uk portal to arrange for a COVID-19 test. Guidelines should be followed with regards to self and household isolation.

In line with government guidelines, all potentially contaminated waste must be placed in a black bag, sealed and placed inside a second black bag and stored in a designated area away from all other waste until 72 hours has passed, when it will be disposed of in the normal manner. The waste bag should be clearly labelled. This waste should not be left for the caretaker to collect unless the caretaker is on site and can assist.

Any equipment which may have been in contact with a symptomatic child /staff member must be cleaned and stored appropriately. If disposal is required, arrangements for the safe disposal will be made in liaison with the Environment Directorate's Waste Services Manager.

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Please contact Claire Gardner (Education) and/or Emma Jones (Education) in order to initiate contact with the relevant services.

If symptomatic, staff and/or pupils will need to complete self-isolation in line with the latest Public Health Wales Guidance. All household contacts will be required to self-isolate immediately upon becoming symptomatic. Pupils and staff are required to be free of fever for 48 hours prior to re-entering school/the workplace.

If a pupil or staff member becomes symptomatic during the session, cleaning regimes will need to be implemented and the Cleaning Manager informed of the areas in which the person(s) had been present throughout the day.

Schools are not required to inform parents and staff other than those directly affected that a symptomatic person(s) has been on the school site.

Identification of a positive case

If the school is made aware of a positive case of COVID-19 in a staff member or pupil, then they must ensure that they contact the following people immediately with Environmental Health being the priority:

Environmental Health

This must be via an email to:
- EnvironmentalHealthMailbox@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

Followed by a phone call to:
- 01495 357813.

Corporate Health and Safety

This must be via an email and/or phone call to:

- Jim Thomas
  Email: Jim.thomas@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk
  Mobile: 07966512415
- Steve Martyn
  Email: Steve.martyn@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk
  Mobile: 07966520584

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Education Transformation Team

This must be an email and/or phone call to:

- Emma Jones
  Email: emma.jones@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk
  Mobile: 07969336066
- Claire Gardner
  Email: claire.gardner@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk
  Mobile: 07815005333

Should more than one case be identified, the Council and relevant partner organisations will assemble in order to determine the level of response required, to address infection prevention control measures, isolation of identified contacts, further testing, communications etc.

Should a positive case/cases be identified, a group with relevant representatives from within the school, the Council and wider partners will be assembled to agree a communication piece for circulation. Therefore, schools should refrain from undertaking direct communications with third parties until such time as a joint communication has been agreed.

Testing for Coronavirus

In order to provide symptomatic staff and household members with a wider choice of testing centre (including the new centre at Cwm) or a home test, we are now encouraging staff and household members to book their own test via the Welsh Government website at the following link:

https://gov.wales/apply-coronavirus-test or by calling free on 119 (between 7am and 11pm). People with hearing or speech difficulties can call 18001 119.

Staff members are expected to keep the headteacher and/or line manager updated throughout the testing process. Schools are required to inform HR when a test has been arranged and when the result has been received by emailing: HR.Management@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

If for any reason a test is unavailable via this method please contact the Civil Contingences team at emergency.planning@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk who will refer directly (Rodney Parade only).

The link is also open to members of the public wishing to book a test. Therefore, can all schools please ensure that parents/carers of pupils are aware of this process for testing of symptomatic pupils and family members.

Finally, can we please remind everyone of the need for the whole household, and any connecting household, to isolate in the event of a member becoming symptomatic.

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Up-to-date guidelines are available on the Welsh Government website at the following link:

https://gov.wales/coronavirus

Please note: You should only have a test if you are symptomatic or you have been instructed by Environmental Health/Public Health Wales or any other medical profession.

The Welsh Government Guidance states:

'*Testing kits*
We intend to provide each school and setting in Wales with a supply of home testing
kits to ensure there is flexibility in the testing available, further information will follow'.

Environmental Health colleagues are presently liaising with Welsh Government regarding the supply for Blaenau Gwent, along with the guidance around issue and use. Further information will be provided during the last 2 weeks in August 2020.

Test, Trace and Protect

In response to an infection, Blaenau Gwent schools, staff and parents will be asked to engage in the Test, Trace, and Protect strategy if they have been identified as a positive case or a contact of a positive case.

The Test, Trace, Protect strategy is to enhance health surveillance in the community, undertake effective and extensive contact tracing, and support people to self-isolate where required to do so. Actions will be informed by international experience and we will maintain strong engagement with the public throughout.

https://gov.wales/test-trace-protect-html

Please see attached the Test, Trace and Protect strategy for educational settings:

test-trace-protect-g
uidance-for-educati

This process will be initiated as soon as a positive result is shared by the laboratory, which will be picked up and managed by the Contact Tracing Team. The team will trace household and wider contacts; Environmental Health would then liaise directly with the school in order to undertake school-based tracing with the headteacher.

Please note that the welsh government guidance states that documentation
for test, trace and protect procedures need to be kept for 21 days, however

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guidance from the Health and Safety team states that documents need to be kept for 28 days.

2.3 Education Facilities

The Division of Responsibilities Guidance will be in operation from the start of the autumn term 2020, with the TE100 process continuing alongside as the operational maintenance and repair management tool. Repairs and requests will be prioritised in line with the health and safety of staff and pupils and/or to facilitate school operations in order to minimise contractors and work onsite

Final - Division of Responsibilities Guida

All contractors will be required to confirm that risk assessments are in place, their programme and areas of work are recorded, this should include management of COVID-19 mitigation.

The Council are required to ensure that contractors operating on BGCBC premises have sufficient training, insurance, licenses, checks i.e. disclosure and barring etc. Contractors need to be made aware of health and safety policy and practice relating to Council premises i.e. asbestos registers, fire risk assessments etc. Physical works and alterations also require careful programming in consideration of planned maintenance, school-based activities, access requirements and so forth.

In accordance with the Division of Responsibility Guidance self-help approaches in need to be managed as follows:

'Self-help approaches - this involves the use of external parties approached directly via the school to address minor works identified by the Headteacher and/or a member of school staff. In instances where this is deemed to be the best approach by the school, Technical Services/Corporate Landlord approval must be sought prior to work being carried out in order to ensure compliance with legislation and the Council's policies'.

This guidance does not preclude schools from carrying out works that are cost efficient to the school, they do however ensure that headteachers and governing bodies comply with necessary technical and health and safety precautions/requirements prior to the works being undertaken.

All works carried out must be risk assessed failure to do so could lead to enforcement action or even prosecution by the HSE or Fire Authority.

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It is essential that any maintenance work planned to be carried out on school sites is taken forward in line with the requirements of the Division of Responsibilities Guidance and is reported to the Education Transformation and/or Technical Services Divisions via a self-help form prior to any works being initiated.

Schools self help approval application

The responsibility for day to day facilities management within the school setting lies with the head, part of which includes the weekly flushing of rarely used hot and cold water systems (taps, showers, water features etc.) throughout the school premises which caretaker's/site managers normally do, (rarely used would be defined as not used at least once a week). Recent advice of two weekly flushing was only required during the school holidays, this additional measure was due to the implications of the extended lockdown and the water safety issues it created. In the event of extended periods of closure similar advice may be given. This is required to manage the risk of legionella and if the school is not fully occupied the risk will obviously increase so all systems need flushing weekly. If a school's caretaker were to be taken ill or have to self-isolate in the future the head will need to identify staff within their school who would be able to undertake the required flushing, this should already be in the school's business continuity plan, a record will need to be kept showing the date and time of the flushing and the name of the person undertaking the work.

Statutory testing regimes by contractors and caretakers need to be maintained, particularly maintenance during the emergency response period, so this will not affect the safe reoccupation of schools in the Autumn Term.

There are numerous statutory testing/checks that are required as a bare minimum every school will be required to ensure the caretaker/site manager carries out the following:
1) Weekly fire alarm tests (if an electrical alarm system is installed)
2) Monthly emergency lighting test
3) Monthly fire extinguisher check
4) Weekly flushing of rarely used water outlets

Toilet Extract Fans

All windows in the toilets need to be closed and not opened.

Fans should run constantly 2 hours before buildings open and 2 hours after buildings have been vacated.

Mechanical

Currently, as per the guidance, schools are required to by-pass recirculating air and ensure 100% fresh air supply/100% or just over extracted air. This will not be a problem in the

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summer/autumn months; however, it may become an issue in the winter months when the air temperature is considerably colder. No definitive guidance is available as yet regarding ventilation for the winter period. This will be monitored and the guidance updated in the autumn term 2020 to reflect the necessary changes.

Natural Ventilation/Windows

All school buildings must use as much natural ventilation/open windows as they can (with the exception of toilets) whilst trying to maintain thermal comfort. *Please note fire doors can no longer be propped open in order to increase ventilation and/or support effective circulation of staff and pupils. The former Fire risk assessments will need to be employed.*

Split Unit/Ceiling Unit Air Conditioning

If the air conditioning unit only serves a single room, it is acceptable to leave it working as it normally would. If the air conditioning unit serves multiple rooms, where there are multiple units or high levels of occupation in rooms it should be switched off. Even with air conditioning working, as much natural ventilation as possible is required.

2.4 Health and Safety and Fire Risk Assessments

The Health and Safety team will resume their annual Health and Safety and Fire risk assessment inspections in the autumn term. There is, however, likely to be a backlog and which will require redress in the first instance. However, if schools have any particular concerns please do not hesitate to contact the Health and Safety team for advice.

Any schools that have had significant alterations during the summer holidays will require a fire risk assessment review. Please contact the health and safety team to arrange this.

The South Wales Fire and Rescue Service have recently confirmed for the autumn term that they will expect the normal standards of fire safety management to be applied in schools. In other words, whatever flexibility was given during the hub provision and summer term this will now cease. *The primary consideration is that any fire doors that were propped open to reduce COVID-19 touch point risks must now be kept closed.* The only exception to rule being if the doors are held open with a device linked to or that reacts to (e.g. a door guard device) a fire alarm activation which has been accounted for within the schools Fire Risk Assessment. Fire drills will also be expected to be carried out as normal, in adherence with social distancing guidelines.

There is a potential low fire risk associated with alcohol based sanitisers (those containing 60% or more alcohol), used in line with COVID-19 mitigation. As these products are alcohol

based they are flammable, however, the risk only occurs if there is an ignition source. As the primary COVID-19 hygiene control measure is handwashing with soap and water, there is no need to stock large quantities of sanitiser on school premises. Most schools have small quantities on site (anything from 50ml to 1 litre containers/dispensers). However, it is recognised that sanitiser will be needed where handwashing facilities are not readily available and/or as an additional control measure. Precautionary measure need to be taken as follows:

- Do not store or use hand sanitiser next to an ignition source (cookers, workshop machinery, bunsen burners etc.)
- Do not store large quantities (e.g. 5 litre containers need to be decanted into smaller containers where possible)
- Ensure that stock is stored in an enclosed fire resistant structure with ventilation. Contact Health & Safety for advice if required.

2.5 Re-opening and Individual Risk Assessment Requirements

An updated model risk assessment will be provided prior to re-opening along with associated guidance to assist schools to review their existing risk assessment. The Council and school settings must take all necessary steps to protect staff, learners and others from COVID-19.

As part of planning for full return in the autumn term, schools should revisit and update their risk assessments by building on the learning to date, and the practices they have already developed. This will enable them to consider the additional risks and control measures to put in place for a return to full capacity. School settings, working with their Council, health and safety adviser and trade unions, should also review and update their wider risk assessments and consider the need for relevant revised controls considering the implications of COVID-19.

As a Council, we will be working with the schools and settings to ensure that we implement sensible and proportionate control measures, to reduce the risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level, whilst not negatively impacting on the well-being of learners and staff.

Schools should work with staff, parents/carers and learners so that there is clarity on what and how the revised arrangements will work in practice. They must have arrangements in place to monitor that the controls are:

- Effective
- Working as planned
- Updated appropriately considering any issues identified and changes in public health advice.

The Council, working with their schools and settings should continue to ensure they are complying with their security plans and ensuring that any changes as a result of COVID-19 compliance do not impact negatively on them.

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Once completed the risk assessment will be reviewed by the Council who will provide feedback to each headteacher prior to the commencement of the autumn term 2020.

2.6 Catering

Normal legal requirements will apply regarding provision of food in schools, and food provided should be in compliance with the ***Healthy Eating in Schools (Nutritional Standards and Requirements) (Wales) Regulations 2013***. Food provided should be designed to reduce access to food and drink high in fat, sugar and salt, and increase the take-up of fruit and vegetables and oily fish. The Welsh Government's ***Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities and Governing Bodies*** is designed to assist with the implementation of the Regulations.

Free School Meals

The Council has a legal duty with regard to the provision of free school meals. The Council is currently exploring the option of continuing the direct payment methods for the first 2 weeks of the autumn term 2020. Further information will be released week commencing 17th August 2020.

Free breakfast in primary school

Section 88 of the School Standards and Organisation Wales (2013) determines that there is not an absolute requirement to provide a breakfast service unless a school specifically asks that it is provided. However, Government advice and guidance actively encourages the provision where it has been common place previously. This is only advice and therefore, whether it is taken on board or not is a matter for an individual Council. It has therefore been determined that the provision can be relaxed during the first 2 weeks of the autumn term in particular to explore pupil numbers and necessary adjustments. There will however, be an emphasis on returning to this provision as soon as it is safe and practicably possible to do so.

Guidance for the hospitality sector has been developed and is available at the following link, this includes guidance on catering facilities which Councils, schools and settings may find helpful to refer to. Further advice is also available on:

https://www.food.gov.uk/

https://gov.wales/tourism-and-hospitality-businesses-guidance-phased-reopening-html

https://www.ukhospitality.org.uk/page/WalesGuidance

The breakfast club specification (below), which is managed by the catering service, outlines what the catering department will seek to provide to primary schools across Blaenau Gwent during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Primary Classroom
Packed Breakfast Clu

The catering service specification (below) outlines what the catering department will seek to provide to primary schools across Blaenau Gwent during the COVID-19 pandemic in relation to hot meal lunch time service - dining room service.

Primary School Hot
Food Sevice in the d

The below specification details how the primary classroom packed lunch service will operate and what the catering department will seek to provide to primary schools across Blaenau Gwent during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Primary Classroom
Packed Lunch Servic

The specification below details the grab & go, hot and cold service - dining room and additional service area that the Catering team will provide to secondary schools during COVID-19 pandemic.

Secondary Grab &
Go Sevice in the din

All of the above will be regularly reviewed in line with school plans or WG guidance.

2.7 Cleaning

Increased cleaning will be implemented, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often using standard products, such as detergents and bleach.

Schools and settings should follow the latest cleaning in non-healthcare settings. Points to consider and implement include putting in place a cleaning schedule that ensures cleaning is generally enhanced and supports the following activities:
- More frequent cleaning of rooms/shared areas after they have been used by different groups
- Frequently touched surfaces being cleaned more often than normal
- Where possible, providing separate toilets for different contact groups. Where this is not possible, using hand sanitiser before entering the toilet and ensuring toilets are cleaned regularly will help. Learners must be encouraged to clean their hands thoroughly after using the toilet.

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All primary schools will have an additional 30 hours per week split over two shifts throughout the day as follows: 9am -12pm and 12pm -3pm. Secondary schools will have an additional 60 hours per week with the hours split the same as the primary schools over two shifts. Special schools will have the same cleaning provision as the secondary schools. The cleaning specifications have been provided below:

Final service standard - Comps = a

Final service standard -Primary Sch

2.8 Access and Visitors

Access to the school for pupils

Access to the school should be from one controlled point, with the queueing system and 2 metre social distancing rules adhered to at all times. Schools should consider how to communicate this to parents/carers and remind them about the process that has been agreed for drop off and collection. Some learners with special educational needs (SEN) will need specific help and preparation for the changes to routine that this will involve, so teachers and special educational needs coordinators should plan to meet these needs, for example using social stories.

Parent appointments

Schools should consider communicating to parents/carers that gathering at the school gates or coming onto the site without an appointment is not allowed. If accessing the school for a pre-planned appointment, then social distancing must be adhered to and they should only access the school through the agreed controlled entrance point. Once on the school site, the parent/carer must only access the areas of the school that have been agreed, access to other areas is not allowed. Guidance on social/physical distancing, areas of the school they can access and hygiene should be explained to parents/carers on or before arrival.

Other staff

Supply teachers, peripatetic teachers and/or other temporary staff can move between schools. They should ensure they minimise contact and maintain social distancing with other staff and children.

This includes the Gwent Music team who are on furlough until 1st September 2020. We have been advised that the service will contact the Council imminently to discuss the level of service which Gwent Music is able to offer throughout the autumn term.

Specialists, therapists, clinicians and other support staff for learners with SEN should provide interventions as usual whilst adhering to social distancing guidance, ensuring cleanliness and sanitisation takes place within their dedicated workspace, which is to be agreed between the providers and the schools. Where social distancing is a potential issue

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and/or staff from within the above services are visiting multiple sites and pupils, it is advisable that they wear a face covering at each setting.

Other staff should ensure that they follow all the preventive measures and risk assessments which have been put in place by the school.

Visitors

Schools should consider how to manage other visitors to the site, such as contractors and ensure site guidance on social/physical distancing and hygiene is explained to visitors on or before arrival. Where visits can happen outside of school hours, they should. Visits should only be essential at this time and should always be pre-planned so that the relevant precautions can be put in place prior to the visit. All visitors should be limited to the areas that they can access within the school. Essential visitors are defined as those who facilitate effective school operations, which could not take place without their engagement.

The Council recommend that schools ask all visitors to complete the attached questionnaire on arrival prior to them entering the school. This will enable the school to maintain a record of visitors should track and trace be required.

COVID Visitors
Questionnaire 06.08

2.9 Mixing of Groups and Staff

Minimising Contacts and Social Distancing

It is well known that minimising contacts and mixing of groups/individuals reduces transmission of COVID-19. Schools must consider how to best implement this and do everything possible to minimise contacts and mixing while delivering a broad and balanced curriculum. Examples of management methods will include: the creation of learner bubbles, staggered start and finish times, breaks and lunch periods. Limited mixing of year group bubbles, designated toilet provision etc. It is acknowledged and understood that schools will have constraints relating to buildings, staffing and other associated resources, and that flexibility may be required. It is imperative that hygiene, cleaning routines and contact tracing fully underpin school operations.

How to Group Learners

Consistent groups help reduce the risk of transmission by limiting the number of learners and staff in contact with each other to only those within the bubble or group. It is accepted that learners and especially the younger age groups, cannot socially distance from staff or from each other; however, consistent groupings will provide an additional protective measure over and above hygiene and cleaning routines. Maintaining distinct contact groups that do not mix or do so infrequently and only when absolutely required makes it quicker

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and easier, in the event of a positive case, to support contact trancing methods which identify those who may need to self-isolate and to keep that number as low as possible.

The use of small contact groups brings a number of educational and operational challenges, which restricts the normal operation of schools. This is the case in both primary and secondary schools, but is particularly difficult in secondary schools.

However, given the decrease in the prevalence of COVID-19 and the plan for the autumn term for the resumption of the full range of curriculum subjects, schools may need to change the emphasis on contact groups, increasing the size of the groups, but staying within their system of controls.

In secondary schools, particularly in the older age groups at Key Stage 3 and 4, the contact groups are likely to need to be the size of a year group to enable schools to deliver the full range of curriculum subjects and for learners to receive specialist teaching. If this can be achieved with small groups, this is recommended. At primary school, and in the younger years at secondary (Key Stage 3), schools may be able to implement smaller groups the size of a full class. If that can be achieved, it is recommended, as this will help to reduce the number of people who could be asked to isolate should someone in a group become ill with COVID-19.

Schools should assess their circumstances and if class-sized groups are not compatible with offering a full range of subjects or managing the practical logistics within and around school, they can look to implement year group (or half year group) sized contact groups. Whatever the size of the group, they should be kept apart from other groups where possible and older learners should be encouraged to keep their distance within groups. Schools with the capability to do it should take steps to limit interaction, sharing of rooms and social spaces between groups as much as possible. When using larger groups, the other measures from the system of controls become even more important; to minimise transmission risks and to minimise the numbers of learners and staff who may need to self-isolate. The Council recognise that younger learners will not be able to maintain social distancing, and it is acceptable for them not to distance within their group.

Both the approaches of separating groups and maintaining distance are not 'all-or nothing' options, and will still bring benefits even if implemented partially. Some schools may keep learners in their class groups for the majority of the classroom time, but also allow mixing into wider groups for specialist teaching, wraparound care and transport. Siblings may also be in different groups. Making efforts to keep these groups at least partially separate and minimising contacts between learners will still offer public health benefits as it reduces the network of possible direct transmission.

All teachers and staff can operate across different classes and year groups in order to facilitate the delivery of the school timetable. This will be particularly important for secondary schools. Where staff need to move between classes and year groups, they should try and keep their distance from learners and other staff as much as they can, ideally 2 metres from other adults. Again, we recognise this is not likely to be possible with younger

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learners and teachers in primary schools can still work across groups if that is needed to enable a full educational offer.

Where mixing between groups cannot be avoided, schools and practitioners should operate a risk-based approach with consistent control measures to reduce the risk of transmission between contact groups. It is important that schools and settings have the flexibility to manage and respond to risks in an appropriate way.

Measures within the Classroom

Maintaining a distance between people while inside and reducing the amount of time they are in face-to-face to contact lowers the risk of transmission. Public health advice indicates that staff in secondary schools maintain distance from their learners, staying at the front of the class, and away from their colleagues where possible. Ideally, adults should maintain a 2 metre distance from each other, and from learners. We know that this is not always possible, particularly when working with younger learners, but if adults can do this when circumstances allow that will help. In particular, they should avoid close face-to-face contact and minimise time spent within 1 metre of anyone. Similarly, it will not be possible when working with many learners who have complex needs or who need close contact care. These learners' educational and care support should be provided as normal.

For learners old enough, they should also be supported to maintain distance and not touch staff and their peers where possible. This will not be possible for the youngest learners and some learners with complex needs and it is not feasible in some schools where space does not allow. Schools doing this where they can, and even doing this some of the time, will help.

When staff or learners cannot maintain distancing, particularly with younger learners in primary schools, the risk can also be reduced by keeping learners in the smaller, class-sized groups described above.

Schools should make small adaptations to the classroom to support distancing where possible. That should include seating learners side by side and facing forwards, rather than face to face or side on, and might include moving unnecessary furniture out of classrooms to make more space.

Measures Elsewhere

Contact groups should be kept apart where possible, meaning that schools should avoid large gatherings such as assemblies or collective worship with more than one group.

When timetabling, groups should be kept apart and movement around the school site kept to a minimum. While passing briefly in the corridor or playground is low risk, schools should avoid creating busy corridors, entrances and exits. Schools should also consider staggered break times and lunch times (and time for cleaning surfaces in the dining hall between groups).

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Schools and settings should also plan how shared staff spaces are set up and used to help staff to distance from each other. Use of staff rooms should be minimised, although staff must still have a break of a reasonable length during the day.

2.10 Personal and Protective Equipment and Other Resources

PPE is not required for sessional or routine use in schools. Current guidance stipulates that the use of PPE by staff within education settings other than to administer first aid, medical and/or intimate care; should be based upon a clear assessment of risk, taking into account each individual setting(s) and the needs of the individual learner(s).

All staff should understand how to put on/remove PPE in order to reduce the risk of onward transmission of infection. A HSE video on correct donning and doffing is available below, please note that the video is aimed at care workers but the procedures for donning and doffing off PPE is the same for school staff.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-GncQ_ed-9w

Orders for PPE and associated resources to aid school operations throughout the autumn term need to be placed and coordinated centrally and so that appropriate funding sources identified.

Please note, PPE and resource-based orders placed prior to the autumn term will need to be focused on replenishment of stock.

Stock will be available for collection only from the Depot.

There is presently a shortage of gloves on order until October/November, however, Corporate Procurement currently hold a limited supply centrally which can be accessed upon request.

Orders for the following items need to be placed via Stuart Jones (Procurement) and Emma Jones (Education):

- Disposable Gloves Bx 100 (S, M, L & XL)*
- Disposable Masks Bx 50
- Disposable Aprons Bx 250's
- Visors
- Anti Bac Wipes (Pk 72/100/200)*
- Anti Bac Spray 750ml
- Anti Bac Hand Soap 5Ltr
- Hand Sanitiser 5Ltr
- Hand Sanitiser 100ml*

    *Sizes may differ subject to availability

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Initial orders need to be placed *no later than 24th August 2020 via email to the aforementioned parties.*

PPE: Availability, Ordering and Use

Respiratory protection		For first aid with a pupil or staff member who has become unwell with symptoms of COVID-19 and needs direct personal care a fluid resistant surgical mask is required. If a pupil's risk assessment requires intimate care and there is a risk of **splashing to the eyes from coughing, spitting or vomiting** a fluid resistant surgical mask is required.
Gloves		For first aid with a pupil or staff member who has become unwell with symptoms of COVID-19 and needs direct personal care disposable gloves are required. For intimate care disposable gloves are required. For cleaning equipment or surfaces that might be contaminated with body fluids such as saliva or respiratory secretions disposable gloves are required.
Eye protection		If a pupil's risk assessment requires intimate care and there is a risk of splashing to the eyes from coughing, spitting or vomiting, safety goggles, safety spectacles (these can't we worn over prescription spectacles) or visor are required. For first aid with a pupil or staff member who has become unwell with symptoms of COVID-19 and needs direct personal care and there is a risk splashing to the eyes from coughing, spitting or vomiting safety goggles, safety spectacles (these can't we worn over prescription spectacles) or visor required.
Body protection e.g. Disposable aprons		For first aid with a pupil or staff member who has become unwell with symptoms of COVID-19 and needs direct personal care a disposable apron is required. For intimate care a disposable apron is required. For cleaning equipment or surfaces that might be contaminated with body fluids such as saliva or respiratory secretions a disposable apron is required.

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Donning or Putting on PPE

Before putting on the PPE, perform hand hygiene. Use alcohol hand rub or gel or soap and water. Make sure you are hydrated and are not wearing any jewellery, bracelets, watches or stoned rings.

- Put on your plastic apron, making sure it is tied securely at the back
- Put on your surgical face mask, if tied, make sure securely tied at crown and nape of neck. Once it covers the nose, make sure it is extended to cover your mouth and chin
- Put on your eye protection if there is a risk of splashing
- Put on non-sterile nitrile gloves
- You are now ready

Doffing or Taking off PPE

Surgical masks are single session use, gloves and apron should be changed

- Remove gloves, grasp the outside of the cuff of the glove and peel off, holding the glove in the gloved hand, insert the finger underneath and peel off second glove
- Perform hand hygiene using alcohol hand gel or rub, or soap and water
- Snap or unfasten apron ties around the neck and allow to fall forward
- Once outside the patient room. Remove eye protection
- Perform hand hygiene using alcohol hand gel or rub, or soap and water
- Remove surgical mask
- Now wash your hands with soap and water.

Please see below a link to HSE guidance on the difference between the use of face masks and face coverings whilst at work;

https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/ppe-face-masks/face-coverings-and-face-masks.htm

2.11 ICT

The SRS Education team have successfully completed several key and very intensive projects over the last few months to help schools cater for the needs of digitally disadvantaged students; help schools move towards the blended learning approach and progress Welsh Government's EdTech programme.

The Council have been in discussions with Welsh Government colleagues over the past few weeks and it has been concluded that we maintain the existing distribution, licencing and revenue arrangements associated with devices and Mi-Fi units which have been allocated until further notice. This will allow us to effectively respond to the unknown/ongoing risks around further COVID-19 outbreaks. The ability to react to local lockdowns would be

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severely impacted if we ceased these services now. In addition, there is a small supply of devices held locally, which can be drawn upon to further support digitally disadvantaged learners should this be required.

SRS emphasis has always been on support as staff and students return. Schools should log calls via VFire where support is needed and liaise with their engineers in the first instance. SRS aim to provide support remotely wherever possible to minimise the need for onsite visits in line with current guidance for schools. Where this is not possible, they can attend site, engineers will need to be advised of the school's protocol for visitors. If equipment needs to be taken away for any reason, SRS requests that device collection takes place at the school's reception in order to minimise time on site.

The Council and SRS are mindful of the need to build and deliver equipment that has been purchased for schools from Welsh Government HWB EdTech funding. Originally, Councils were advised by Welsh Government that lead times could be extensive and that 5 or 6 months could be expected. We know that Welsh Government continue their efforts to bring this forward and SRS has worked with Blaenau Gwent officers to place orders as early as possible to minimise the impact upon teaching and learning in schools and ensure Welsh Government have the best chance to fast track orders. SRS will receive these devices in waves, and as these waves start to arrive they will be a key priority.

2.12 Co-located Provision and 3rd Party Licensing

Co-located provisions operating under license on school premises must be provided with a copy of the schools re-opening risk assessment. They will be required to agree to abide by and sign a copy of this risk assessment, along with any subsequent reviews. In addition, licensees are required to complete their own risk assessment associated with delivery of the provision for which they are responsible, and share this with the school. Key considerations for each risk assessment include:

- The use of shared spaces
- Access and visitor control measures
- Contact tracing
- The management and mixing of groups

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3. School Management and Support Functions

3.1 EAS, School Improvement and blended learning offer

Support for School Improvement

The Directorate will continue to work closely with our commissioned school improvement service the EAS, to ensure that agreed principles and practices continue to be aligned. The EAS Playlist continues to be the main conduit for communicating school improvement activity to our schools.

Supporting Our Schools Playlist

Moreover, the following arrangements are in place for the commencement of the new academic year 2020-21.

Appointment of Additional Capacity within School Improvement.

The Council's Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) agreed a temporary structure for the Education Directorate in the summer term 2020. The interim structure report also made the point that there needs to be consideration of the Education Directorate's permanent structural and financial requirements at a later point to address capacity, particularly in the school improvement aspects of work. To support the interim structure with strategic capacity and skills in school improvement, it has been agreed to introduce an interim fixed term post of Lead Officer - School Improvement for a period of 12 months – subject to review by the newly appointed Corporate Director of Education. Importantly, the role will facilitate a continuation of the Education Directorate's improvement journey, supporting schools with re-opening and continuing to develop, whilst also responding to COVID-19 and delivery of priorities identified within the Corporate Improvement Plan. The recruitment process is underway to appoint to this new position for the new academic year.

Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP)

Welsh Government has now released the principles of the ALP. It is clear that during the COVID-19 emergency crisis that many learners have not progressed as much as they might in terms of their progress in learning, some having been impacted more seriously than others. Evidence from a range of reliable sources, including those focusing closely on Wales, suggests that most or all learners have been affected, and that the most vulnerable have been affected the most. The comments in this paper should be read in the context of the Welsh Government Learning Guidance, designed to inform practice as we return to school in September 2020. See the following link for more information: https://gov.wales/guidance-learning-schools-and-settings-autumn-term-covid-19.

Blaenau Gwent planning meeting will be circulating further information regarding the localised approach to schools by the end of week commencing 17th August 2020.

Principle 1: Learners in Greatest Need: Affected Cohorts

The most affected cohorts currently appear to be:
- Pupils preparing for examinations in the forthcoming academic year (years 11, 12 and 13) who have relatively little time between returning to school and taking life-changing public examinations
- Vulnerable and disadvantaged children, as defined by a range of approaches, but including the poorest children and families, learners with special educational needs, learners from BAME communities and learners in Welsh medium schools who live in non-Welsh speaking households
- Year 7, because of the disruption to the transition from primary to secondary schools

The cohort analysis above, which is in line with the findings of many other countries and territories with similar characteristics to Wales, has informed the allocation of funding, and will inform the priority groups we expect to be addressed by the work we do. We should note, though, that there will be individuals not in these groups who will need support, and it is an important principle that head teachers will decide which groups and individuals will get additional support.

Principle 2: The Recruit, Recover, Raise Standards Curriculum: Areas of Support Learners Should Receive

Curriculum reform remains our central priority for education in Wales, and indeed, Blaenau Gwent. It is essential that all our work with the education system in the context of COVID-19 aligns with international best practice, which is also the basis of our curriculum reform proposals. The focus for the coming year will be:

- Literacy, numeracy and digital competence within a broad and balanced curriculum – for the examination years, this will include higher order reading and writing skills, high level mathematics where relevant, and digital competence at the appropriate level and as relevant to learners progressing with their qualifications
- Development of independent learning skills, to enable and motivate learners in all groups to make accelerated progress by working more effectively alone and out of school
- Support and engagement through coaching – this in recognition that the most disengaged learners will need coaching and emotional support as well as support for examination preparation and skills

This focus will be particularly relevant for the priority cohorts. It is intended to work closely with Qualifications Wales to ensure our approach to curriculum and learning is consistent with and promotes the credibility and validity of the 2021 exam series.

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Principle 3: Growing Capacity: What the Funding is designed to provide

The Welsh Government response to the situation is to dedicate financial resources to the creation of new capacity in the system. The investment amounts to almost £29 million and will be enough to grow capacity in the system by the equivalent of 600 teachers and 300 teaching assistants. Alongside this, Blaenau Gwent will use our current investment in Professional Learning, digital infrastructure, connectivity, devices and content to enrich the experiences schools make available to learners. Welsh Government and this Council do not want to place restrictions on head teachers in how they go about appointing and deploying this new capacity and recognise that:

- Schools may appoint teachers, teaching assistants and other roles in the school designed to provide coaching, in line with the school's understanding of its learners
- The new capacity may be full time or part time
- The new colleagues might work across more than one school
- Head teachers may appoint new teachers to the school in order to release those who know their pupils best to work with them to accelerate their progress
- There may be instances where a group of new colleagues is recruited to work across a whole cluster or collaborative partnership
- The skill-sets of new colleagues will need to reflect the needs of groups and learners
- The delivery model within which new colleagues work will be specific to the needs of the school and its learners

Principle 4: Reducing Bureaucracy and Ensuring Transparency

The allocation of nearly £29 million across Wales to a project at a time of severe financial stress across the education system and beyond means that there is a need to ensure that such resources are used well. Whilst at the same time, keeping the paperwork to a minimum, so we are proposing:

- The school should set out what it intends to do with the resources in a simple way, indicating the number of pupils included and an outline of the curriculum and staffing solution
- This should be agreed by the school's CA in the case of schools currently designated as requiring red and amber levels of support
- The intention should be signed off by the Governing Body and made available to the school's parents and community
- Welsh Government are advocating a 'learning brief' as part of the education system, by sharing intelligence and insights in respect of the impact of the programme as it develops.

Principle 5: The Principle of Collaboration

Regions, Local Authorities, Universities and Other Partners

Nationally, Welsh Government want to encourage strategic education partners to collaborate in support of this work. Welsh Government are already seeing examples of this

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emerging across the system, and this activity will provide further opportunities for the regions, Councils, Universities, FE Colleges and other partners to support children, families and schools in returning to school.

School Level Collaboration

Blaenau Gwent's Vision for Education is formed around a school-led, self-improving system, which is in line with Welsh Government's desire to encourage clusters and collaborative working of schools to pool their resources and achieve critical mass in growing capacity. This include cross-phase collaboration, collaboration between schools in the same phase and collaboration based on partnership delivery e.g. Post 16 provision. In Blaenau Gwent, we are establishing a Post 16 Partnership Board in collaboration with Coleg Gwent and key stakeholders to drive this agenda forward. The Partnership Board will be formally constituted in the new academic year.

From a Blaenau Gwent context, we advocate this school to school approach and have experience of how this operated through the supply cluster project, but we await confirmation as to the level of funding that we are to receive and we will be in contact as soon as this is known so that we can support schools in securing the additional capacity as soon as possible.

INSET Days.

Should schools wish to seek the support of the EAS staff in their INSET days they should contact Sarah Davies PCA to discuss their requirements.

Staff Visits

The schools' Challenge Adviser will make contact with schools early in September to gain an understanding of their operating model and to discuss priorities and support needs. Consequently, EAS staff will not visit a school without first having received a copy of the school's risk assessment; this is to ensure it is safe to do so within the context in which the school is operating.

Blended Learning

Headeachers will have received the guidance that has been developed by Estyn and the EAS that provides information related to how they may consider developing integrated approaches to support blended learning for the opening of schools in September 2020. The guidance support schools as they re-evaluate learning for the foreseeable future in response to a range of challenges:

- Supporting learners to return to 'learning fitness'
- Developing learning which allows learners to continue to progress
- Ensuring coherence for learners between in school and remote learning

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- Develop appropriate learning while current curriculum requirements have been *dis-applied
- Use the ethos, principles and guidance of the new Curriculum for Wales as support to the current challenges, rather than this being an additional burden
- To encourage practitioners to use and develop their professional judgment to best benefit learners

Developing
Integrated Approach

Autumn term PL events:

Virtual professional learning activities will continue to be offered during the autumn term. There will also be opportunities for bespoke PL for individual schools to be delivered in this way. The dates of all PL activities will continue to be shared through the EAS Playlist.

SDP/Grant: A Readiness Approach

Headteachers will have received the EAS document entitled a Readiness Approach and will be aware of the timeframe for updating SDP's by October half term. In line with the agreed approach and mindful of the demands placed upon the education sector in the current circumstances, coupled with the start of a new academic year, Blaenau Gwent will be looking to hold virtual SDP and grant planning meetings with those schools selected on either 19th or 21st October 2020 just prior to the Hwb deadline date of October half term for final submission.

As part of this process the Council will write to those schools that have been selected week commencing 7th September 2020 and invite the head teacher and Chair of Governors to the virtual meeting where their SDP and grant plan will be reviewed. During this meeting, appropriate additional support and guidance to schools that can be provided will be discussed.

This regional review and evaluation process aims to support all schools in ensuring that the processes for school improvement planning are effective. There is an expectation that within the current context that plans address emerging needs. These include:

- The school's distance learning strategy and blended learning offer
- The targeted provision to support all groups of vulnerable learners
- The school's communication and support strategies with parents/carers/learners.

A Readiness
Approach to Appro

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Schools Causing Concern

For those schools identified as a School Causing Concern (SCC) headteachers will already know that the formal SCC meetings were suspended during our emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic and meetings were replaced with informal supportive check in and catch up meetings towards the latter part of the summer term. However, whilst being mindful of the demands placed upon headteachers at this time, it is intended that for the year ahead as we shift towards a business as usual approach, this will see the re-establishment of the half termly schools causing concern meetings that are convened in line with the agreed regional policy. The dates of these meetings for the year ahead will be communicated to relevant Chairs of Governors and schools at the start of the 2020/21 academic year.

Governing Body Meetings

Almost all schools have now undertaken governing body meetings 'virtually' at one point or another over the past few months. These have been, in the main, implemented successfully. If schools feel that during the autumn term (or beyond), to avoid any unnecessary meetings and additional people in your schools, the wish to carry on with virtual meetings the EAS will facilitate these. To ensure that the team can provide schools with support for governing body meetings in the autumn term if schools haven't already done so please complete the following below:

Form to provide meeting dates.

If schools have already provided future dates, through a clerked ordinary / AGM meeting, these will already be held on the database and there is not a need to re-submit, unless schools wish to amend dates.

For all except urgent meetings, the statutory timescales detailed in the SLA will apply.
If a school intends to hold a 'face to face' governing body meeting, then the school will need to ensure appropriate risk assessments are in place that are in the line with the latest Welsh Government guidelines.

Please do not contact GB clerks directly, as the team will manage availability, send out Microsoft Teams meeting invitations, along with the agreed agenda and latest guidance. If individual governors or the whole governing body require support to use MS teams, please get in touch governor.support@sewaleseas.org.uk and the EAS team can arrange support. The Council's LA Governor Appointment Panel is now meeting virtually to process applications for LA governors and are considering applications for those LA governors whose term of office is due to end in the autumn or spring terms. Headteachers and Chairs of Governors are encouraged to provide the following application form to those LA governors whose term of office is due to lapse within the timeframe specified above.

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Blaenau Gwent LA
Governor Applicatio

Should schools require further advice regarding the filling of other governor vacancies, this can be accessed by contacting the EAS governor support team.

3.2 HR Guidance

Risk Assessment

Covid-19 Individual Risk Assessment

A risk assessment, which is available via this link: **Covid-19 Individual Risk Assessment** should be used for all workers within the Authority, who fall into the following categories:

- All workers who have previously received a shielding letter from the Government ("the Extremely Vulnerable")
- Vulnerable Workers (to include all pregnant workers) as previously defined by Government guidelines
- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) workers (reported as being most affected and at risk of the COVID-19 pandemic)
- Workers who live with the Extremely Vulnerable

For all categories to whom this risk assessment applies, where workers have been absent from the workplace and a return is being considered, this risk assessment **must** be carried out **prior** to staff entering the workplace. This risk assessment should also be reviewed regularly, and whenever anything material changes e.g. in relation to an individual's health or working environment, to ensure it is up to date and fit for purpose.

This risk assessment should be carried out in conjunction with the All Wales COVID-19 workforce risk assessment tool available via this link: **Self-Assessment Tool.** The self-assessment tool should then be discussed with managers and will inform discussions relating to the COVID-19 Individual risk assessment.

If headteachers/business managers require further advice, please contact their Senior HR Business Partner.

Pregnant Workers

During the outbreak, pregnant workers have been advised to follow stringent social distancing to reduce the risk of severe illness from coronavirus. There is a long-standing requirement for employers to put in place measures to ensure workplace safety where a significant health and safety risk is identified for a new or expectant mother. ***Please refer to the Staff***

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Guidance from Organisational Development for detailed information and advice in relation pregnant worker using the link below:

http://intranet/coronavirus-staff-information.aspx

Staff Well Being

The Council recognises that employees may face increased pressures at work, as well as potentially their own personal illness or caring responsibilities. Supporting employee health and wellbeing will be critical for the Council to support an extended response. Heads/Business Managers are encouraged to provide opportunities for staff to discuss any concerns with them and consider the Council's provisions for leave and flexible working and the use of the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).

Details and useful information from our EAP, Care First, can be accessed at the below overleaf.

Employee assistance programme (Care First)

Care first is free to use 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year and staff don't need to ask their manager to use the service. Call 0800 174319 to speak to a professional counsellor or information specialist in confidence about a range of issues such as well-being, family matters, relationships, debt management, workplace issues, and much more.

For additional support during this time, a number of webinars are also available on the Care First Lifestyle website. The details are circulated to all e-mail users on a regular basis with a variety of webinars relating to the difficulties of COVID-19, such as managing stress in uncertain times, how to manage change, etc.

The Organisation Development Division also provides regular advice and guidance to managers and staff and the latest guidance can be found here:

http://intranet/coronavirus-staff-information.aspx

In addition, free help and support for education staff is also available through the Education Support Partnership:

www.educationsupportpartnership.org.uk

Occupational Health Service

The Authority's OH service will continue to provide a service and the following will apply:

- Only electronic referrals will be accepted during this period. All referrals must be emailed to occupational.health@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk
- In the absence of an employee signature on the referrals, Heads/Business Managers must confirm that they have discussed the content with the individual

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- Referrals must include a contact email address for the employee
- All appointments will be held remotely via telephone call.

3.3 Home to School Transport

The Council has a statutory duty to provide free home to school transport for all eligible learners of compulsory school age, in line with the Blaenau Gwent Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy (2020).

- Social distancing guidance to passengers on public transport (https://gov.wales/travelling-safely-during-coronavirus-pandemic-guidance-public-html#section-42710) will not apply **on dedicated** home to school transport from the autumn term because:

    o The overall risk to learners from COVID-19 is very low
    o They do not mix with the general public on those journeys
    o Dedicated home to school transport often carries the same group of learners on a regular basis, and those learners may also be together in school
    o The predictability, which public transport does not offer in the same way, will allow for planning so that protective measures can be put in place.

Key Principles

- Vehicles will be confined to individual journeys with the same groups of pupils each day, as opposed to multiple journeys conveying different groups of pupils.

- It is expected that transport providers use PPE at all times and have effective and agreed cleaning regimes in place, pre and post each journey.

- Screens should be provided on vehicles where possible in line with the required standards.

- Escorts and drivers who provide assistance to learners whilst on transport should where appropriate levels of PPE in line with the needs of the child, young person and current Welsh Government guidance (as detailed in section 2.10).

- Transport providers must maintain daily records of pupils on each journey and ensure that they comply with the Test, Trace and Protect strategy.

- Providers must ensure that they complete risk assessments, which **must be** submitted to the Council for review prior to operation commencing, to ensure safe and effective operation in compliance with Welsh Government and Public Health Wales Guidance.

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- Seats will be allocated where possible with no movement permitted on the bus.

- Providers will be expected to implement sanitising stations on the vehicles and comply with Welsh Government guidance to support respiratory hygiene – catch it, kill it, bin it.

- There will be a zero tolerance policy for those who do not abide by the rules and or exhibit poor behaviours during a journey. Therefore, operators will have the right to exclude pupils and refuse transport for 5 days pending a review by Transport, Education and the School.

- Parents must be advised that learners must not board home to school transport if they or a member of their household has any of the four identified COVID-19 symptoms (a new continuous cough, a high temperature or loss of taste or smell). Learners should also not attend school if they are in a household that is required to self-isolate as contacts of a case under TTP or in quarantine if returned from a country specified by the FCO. Learners should not routinely have their temperature taken. This is not a reliable method for identifying COVID-19.

- If a learner develops symptoms whilst at school/setting or their educational institution, they will be sent home. They must not travel on home to school transport. The school or setting should contact the parent/carer who should make arrangements for the learner's journey home.

- This equally applies to drivers and escorts.

- Anyone with symptoms must follow the guidance: https://gov.wales/self-isolation-stay-home-guidance-households-possible-coronavirus

- Learners, drivers and escorts who have been in contact with someone that has developed symptoms whilst at a school/setting or education establishment or on home to school transport do not need to go home to self-isolate unless they develop symptoms themselves (in which case, they should arrange a test) or the symptomatic person subsequently tests positive (see below) or if they have been requested to do so by NHS Test and Trace.

- All parties must perform hand hygiene by washing their hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with soap and running water or use hand sanitiser after contact with someone who has symptoms before boarding and after leaving the transport.

- If a person with symptoms has been in a vehicle that provides home to school transport, the vehicle must be cleaned and disinfected with appropriate disinfectant with special attention to touch points e.g. rails, arm rests etc. to reduce the risk of passing the infection on to other people. See the COVID-19: cleaning of non-healthcare settings guidance for information, including carrying out cleaning procedures and adjusting ventilation

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- Wherever vehicle capacity allows, distancing between individual passengers, or groups of passengers, will be employed. In particular, distancing will be considered where children attending different schools travel on the same vehicle and for certain children with complex needs e.g. those that spit uncontrollably. In these cases, alternative dedicated transport may be considered to be more appropriate.

- Where schools/parents procure their own transport for pupils, the responsibility of the risk assessment and COVID-19 mitigation lie with headteacher/parent and **not** the Council.

4. Pupils

4.1 Attendance, Inclusion and Vulnerable groups

In addition to the Operational Guidance for Schools and Settings from the Autumn Term, Welsh Government has also issued Guidance for Supporting Vulnerable and Disadvantaged Learners. The Guidance for Supporting Vulnerable and Disadvantaged Learners is intended to supplement the Operational Guidance and should be read alongside it. The two guidance documents have been written to assist schools to put in place proportionate protective measures for children and staff but also enable learners to receive an inclusion education that offers a broad and balanced curriculum allowing them to thrive and progress.

The Guidance for Vulnerable and Disadvantaged Learners reaffirms the responsibility of all schools and the Council to adhere to existing Welsh Government Inclusion guidance as well as the SEN Code of Practice and other relevant legislation.

The two guidance documents acknowledge that schools will need to make judgments about how to balance and minimise any risks from COVID-19 with providing a full educational experience for children and young people as has always been the case with other Health and Safety risks. It also acknowledges that there cannot be a one size fits all approach and that each school will have local challenges to address.

As such, in terms of managing the needs of pupils as they return to school full-time, the local context, individual pupil need and background will all contribute to how each pupil will need to be supported.

Over the past weeks, a range of information has been circulated to schools from the EAS, the Educational Psychology Service and the Gwent Attachment Service which have highlighted the importance of emotional wellbeing and the importance of a pupil centred approach to understanding and managing pupil need at this time.

Education teams are available to support schools in discussing individual pupils and considering how to reduce risk and support learner well-being.

Attendance

Attendance guidance from 1st September 2020 until further notice.

Following consultation, the Welsh Government has revoked the School Performance and Absence Targets (Wales) Regulations 2011 (in force from 7 August 2020). As a result, schools are not required to set targets for the academic year 2020 but correct coding will enable WG and LA to track any COVID-19 related absences and support any 2nd wave concerns, as well as ongoing welfare of pupils.

All learners, including those that were previously shielding, will return to their school or setting from 1st September 2020. Those learners who have been advised that they no longer have the need to shield should be supported in returning back to school. Support to transition back to school will be crucial for this cohort, as their level of anxiety may be greater due to the length of period many have had to shield.

The Welsh Government's view is that it would not be appropriate for a Council/school to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) or commence proceedings for non-attendance at the school. The Welsh Government will monitor the situation over the first half term before reviewing its position.

If a learner is unable to attend the physical setting of the school for any reason it is vital the school continues to engage regularly with the learner remotely. Learning guidance is available to support schools and settings in doing so.

Schools and settings should keep a record of attendance and families should notify their school if their child is unable to attend and explain the reason for this to enable the school to record attendance correctly. This will help schools, settings and Councils plan for, and understand any barriers to, learners returning to school and identify any further support needed. It will be critical that all learners engage with the school and any concerns about engagement, or the welfare of a learner, are followed up immediately by the school. Concerns should only be escalated to the Education Welfare Service after the school has made every attempt to engage the family.

The Education Welfare Officers (EWOs) will continue to be based either at home or at their secondary school. Contact with primary schools will be by telephone, email etc. however, should the primary school require a face to face meeting this will need to be arranged in advance to restrict the number of schools being visited on any one day.

Public Health Wales advice on learner attendance

HPA 'Guidance in infection control in schools and other childcare settings' must be followed along with the additional advice below, which specifically relates to COVID-19:

Under no circumstances should learners attend schools/settings if they:
- Feel unwell, have any of the three identified COVID-19 symptoms (a new continuous cough, or a high temperature or loss of or change to their sense of taste or smell) or they have tested positive to COVID-19 in the past 7 days
- Live in a household or are part of an extended household with someone who has symptoms of COVID-19 or has tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 14 days.

Guidance on Recording Attendance

Schools should record attendance and absence in keeping with the codes below until further notice.

What code should be used?

Code	Meaning	Statistical Category
/	Attending school in the am	Present
\	Attending school in the pm	Present
C	Unable to physically attend the school due to medical/health risks or caring responsibilities agreed with the school. Also for a staggered return in the first 14 days when some age groups return.	Authorised absence
#	Planned school closure for all pupils which may take place in the first 14 days, e.g. planning days.	Not required to attend
Y	Not expected to attend due to school closure (in the event of subsequent school closures).	Not required to attend
I	Illness, including COVID-19	Authorised Absence
All other codes apply as per the guidance on school attendance:	https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/guidance-on-school-attendance-codes.pdf	

/\: The code for learners who attend school
All children in the expected intake for that day or in a priority group (children of critical workers and vulnerable children) should be recorded as present / \ upon arrival at their school or education setting.

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C: The code for learners who are unable to attend
This includes learners who are unable to physically attend school for reasons understood and agreed by the school. They should be recorded as **code C** (Other authorised circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)).
This code would be used for learners who have medical or health reasons preventing them from physically attending or they may have exceptional circumstances such as caring responsibilities.

- This code would be used for learners who are self-isolating as set out in the preventative section of this guidance
- This code will also be used during the first 14 days of term when some year groups will have staggered returns
- This code should not be used if the learner is unwell with COVID-19 symptoms where the I code should be used.

Schools must engage with parents/carers to understand why they are not attending and ensure there are not any concerns about their well-being or alternative support options that could be arranged to enable them to attend. Any concerns should be followed up by the school or education setting and where relevant the council.
The school should review the situation with the learner and parents or carers on a regular basis to avoid any prolonged absence.

#: The code for planned school closures for all pupils
Should be used for planned days where pupils are not required to attend such as planning days in the first weeks of term.

Y: The code for partial openings or enforced school closure.
Should be used for enforced school closure in the event of further requirements due to COVID-19.

Using other authorised absence and attendance codes
Where other specific authorised absence and attendance codes are more appropriate schools should use these as usual.

Children Missing from Education (CME)

Due to COVID-19 there may have been a number of pupil movements since March 2020 resulting in pupils moving within or out of the County Borough. There have also been a number of in-year transfers that have been processed just before, during or after lock down. If you are unable to contact any of these parents, please follow your CME processes and refer to your EWO as soon as possible.

Elective Home Education (EHE)

Where parents are anxious about their child returning to school, there could be an increase in the number of parents deciding to EHE their child. If you become aware of any parents thinking about this, please can you discuss this with your EWO immediately so that they can make contact with the parent.

EWS Welfare Check Request

COVID-19 2020 - 1st September 2020 onwards until further notice.

Please complete this and email to your EWO if you wish to escalate concerns re non-contact or non-school attendance.

EWS Welfare Check
Request Form.docx

The EWS must also adhere to social distancing and risk assessment requirements but where a school has used a variety of methods to engage with a pupil and carer they are able to attempt "door knock" sightings and contact with pupils and carers. They can also advise re escalation or CME/EHE issues that may arise.

ALN Panel

ALN panel dates have been circulated and will commence via Microsoft TEAMS. The first Panel is scheduled for 15th September 2020. This panel will not be considering new requests but those outstanding from the summer term in the first instance.

Support for Vulnerable Groups

GEMS

GEMS staff will be available to start back in schools from 14th September 2020; however, this will be subject to receiving guidance from schools as to how GEMS staff will be able to work safely in schools in line with current Welsh Government guidance. GEMS staff will contact all timetabled schools during the first week back to see when they are able to go to school and ask what risk assessments are in place to ensure the safety of all concerned.

Working practices, and the way GEMS supports pupils is unlikely to be the same as it was prior to the school closures but arrangements will be looked at further in September.

SenCom

Welsh Government Operational Guidance for schools and settings states that peripatetic services such as those provide by SenCom to learners with speech, language and communication needs or a hearing, vision or multi-sensory impairment should look to resume interventions as usual. To allow schools the initial time required to fully re-open, SenCom will initially continue to provide their remote offer and will not begin a full programme of physical visits from the start of the autumn term.

Early in the autumn term SenCom will be in contact with all schools to share their risk assessments and discuss the best approach to adopt for children on their caseload in each school. In the interim should you require support on specialist equipment, advice or a training need then please contact SenCom directly.

SenCom - Getting in touch

- If a child or young person, who staff believe should be known to SenCom is returning to school or struggling to access school work from home, please get in touch. SenCom can offer remote advice for children and young people with Sensory Impairment or Speech, Language and Communication Needs, to support them in these settings. If you would like to take up this offer, please contact SenCom via **01633 648888** or by the email addresses:

  sencom@torfaen.gov.uk / ComIT@torfaen.gov.uk / HIS@torfaen.gov.uk / VIS@torfaen.gov.uk

  As part of the service offer whilst SenCom works remotely, the Hearing and Vision Impairment Services have developed temporary websites for parents and education staff to find a wide range of resources. We are now making these sites widely available and they can be accessed via the following links

  - https://sites.google.com/view/sencom-vis
  - https://sites.google.com/view/hi-service-sencom/home

SenCom – Hearing Impairment Guidance – Face Masks

The evidence remains clear that maintaining social distancing and good hand hygiene is the most effective way to protect yourself and others from contracting coronavirus. In Wales, teachers are not expected to wear face masks although we have to appreciate some staff will want to wear a face covering for their own reassurance. The safety measures that are recommended to keep people safe can mean that those with a hearing impairment feel particularly anxious about a return to school.

The service would therefore like to take this opportunity to share a clear message about the impact this may have on children and young people with a hearing impairment. Hearing equipment such as hearing aids and cochlear implants are vital pieces of equipment in enabling the user to access spoken language. However, they have limitations. Typically, they

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will work well when the speaker is up to two metres away from the hearing impaired child/young person.

We would like to raise awareness of the steps that can be taken to support communication. This might include:

- temporarily removing the face mask and communicating within the current safety guidance (e.g. ensuring hand washing before and after, not touching the face when the mask is removed, remaining within the social distancing guidelines of staying 2 meters apart)

- using alternative forms of communication – such as writing things down or via text messages, depending on the individual needs of the child

- dictation or translation apps can sometimes provide a speech to text option when out and about

- ensuring the listening environment is as quiet as possible

- communicating through a window/glass panel – portable screens have been used by some services

- considering the need for face-to-face meeting, and whether a video call could work as an alternative for individual deaf children

- The National Deaf Children's Society have produced an infographic video that summarises the above top tips

- Following Welsh Government guidance children and young people in class are seated facing forwards at a two metre social distance. This means that they will not be able to see the faces of their peers in order to access lip pattern and facial expressions to aid their understanding of what is said. It will therefore be important that the class teacher repeats, rephrases and clarifies what others say so that the child/young person can follow a discussion

- If a child/young person has been issued with an additional listening device, it is important that it is used in school and also at home to support online learning, if appropriate. This equipment can help to reduce the effects of background noise, distance and reverberation. It can also be connected to devices such as laptops and tablets to improve access to audio for supporting online learning and to help the child or young person to connect socially with family and friends

If a hearing impaired child/young person is experiencing difficulties accessing their learning, please contact the service to discuss.

Some people have also asked about clear face masks – where you can see someone's mouth. If face masks are going to be used, these would be preferable.

https://www.theclearmask.com/product

Face masks which are washable and can therefore be reused;

https://www.friendlyfacemasks.co.uk/

The National Deaf Children's Society have a blog about how to make DIY clear face masks at home for those that would like to do so. Such DIY face masks would obviously be for use by the general public, and not for use in health settings.

You do need to be aware that condensation can be an issue with such masks that are worn close to the face. There are a number of solutions to this, from rubbing an unscented bar of soap on the inside and polishing off to products such as Muc-Off Anti-Fog Treatment which can be bought from Amazon has been recommended.

There has also been discussion over whether face visors or shields might be better still, particularly for professionals working in services for deaf children. School could consider face shields for staff that require the reassurance of a face covering whilst working. These have been produced by the Design Technology Departments in many schools.

In addition to this additional advice, it is essential that all the strategies that would usually be in place to ensure a deaf friendly environment are adhered too. Virtual Deaf Awareness training opportunities are available that staff should complete to raise awareness or remind them of the important things to consider. Please contact the service to discuss on 01633 648888 or email joanne.plant@torfaen.gov.uk.

4.2 Youth Service

Counselling Service

Counsellors will return to school in line with BACP Guidance. Counsellors will continue to support young people with their mental health and emotional wellbeing in schools for year 7 to 11 and in the community for year 6 and post 16. There is a deficit in counselling days in some schools due to counsellors reducing hours and moving settings. The process of identifying additional counsellors is underway. It is anticipated that these will be in place early September 2020. There has also been additional funded awarded until March 2021 to provide additional counselling hours to address the anticipated 'spike' in referrals post lockdown and the return to schools.

Funding has also been afforded for play therapy up until March 2021. The service is currently in the process of identifying an appropriate venue and therapist to undertake this work with children below year 6. As soon as the service is in place then the appropriate agencies will be informed with referrals being taken from SPACE Wellbeing Panel in the main.

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A psychologist will also join the Youth Service in the autumn term. Youth Workers will have access to the psychologist for consultation and support in their roles when supporting young people in a variety of settings.

Youth Engagement and Progression Framework

Schools and professionals will continue to work closely with the Youth Engagement and Progression Coordinator (EPC) to facilitate the Early Identification Tool (EIT) and the Vulnerable Learners Transition Group. These processes can help identify individuals who are at risk of being Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). Through the continuation of this work we can ensure children and young people receive early intervention and appropriate support.

School Linked Staff (Inspire 2 Achieve)

Inspire 2 Achieve (I2A) continues to offer support to young people aged 11 – 16 across all secondary provisions within Blaenau Gwent. The staffing teams consists of 2 x Year 6-7 Transition Workers, 2 x Year 11 Transition Workers, 1 x Health and Wellbeing Worker, 4 x Youth Workers (linked to mainstream secondary provision), 1 x Alternative Education Worker, 1 x Group Delivery Worker. Referrals come via I2A Team Lead and EPC. Support is delivered via 1:1 and group work, via the development of action plans with young people. Termly plans are shared with key school links outlining projects and activities for each provision. I2A is a rolling project, meaning staff support young people during the school holidays, in addition to the school term.

Positive Futures

Positive Futures will continue to provide an alternative education programme off-site for those referred. The project will liaise closely with schools to determine the most appropriate method of delivery ensuring that each referring school and pupils attending are not compromised. Young people referred will attend the provision and work through a programme that addresses their behaviour concerns and puts interventions in place in order to maintain their full time educational status.

4.3 Safeguarding, Children Looked After Mentors and Operation Encompass

Wales Safeguarding Procedures

The Wales Safeguarding procedures guide safeguarding practice for all practitioners. Please refer to these procedures. They are available to download as an app or use the web based version **https://safeguarding.wales/**

The Welsh Government has produced non-statutory guide to remind practitioners working across agencies of their responsibilities to safeguard children and to support them in responding to concerns about children at risk.

During the COVID-19 outbreak the Information, Advice and Assistance Team (IAA) continue to be fully operational, the office hours remain as 9am - 5pm Monday – Friday.

The IAA Team will be able to offer advice if you have concerns for a child: **01495 315700**

Referrals can continue to be made to Blaenau Gwent Children's Services using a multi-agency referral form (MARF) **here**.

The MARF should be sent to: **DutyTeam@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk**

After 5pm, on weekends and Bank Holidays

Contact the South East Wales Emergency Duty Team (EDT): **0800 328 4432**

If you think a child or young person is in immediate danger, contact the Police on 999

Advice in relation to safeguarding in education is also available:

- **Sarah Dixon, Safeguarding in Education Manager**
  Sarah.Dixon@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk Tel: 07815 005241

Children Looked After (CLA) Mentors in Schools

CLA education mentors provide 1:1 support to a small number of CLA pupils. The service works on a referral/priority needs basis and is not a service available to all CLA pupils. This is considered to be an essential service. In preparation for the start of the autumn term Social Services have undertaken the following preparations for this work to be delivered in schools:

- RAG rated the children who we believe are in priority need for this service from September.
- Minimised the number of children who will receive this support in school (to put this into perspective, we have prioritised 9/10 pupils to receive the 1:1 support in school, most of whom were already receiving the service prior to lockdown).
- Ensured that the service will only be delivered in BG schools (not in neighbouring LA's)
- Our planning has been such that mentors will not be attending multiple sites in one day. We are able to restrict the sessions to no more than one school in any one day.

At present Social Services are not able to provide a timetable of when the mentoring sessions will take place as this has to be done in conjunction with the CLA designated member of staff for the school that each pupil attends. The sessions have to be planned around each pupil's individual school timetable (and room availability within the school).

Mentors work term-time only and will liaise with the small number of schools that the identified pupils attend upon their return in September 2020. The mentors will not start

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these sessions until those discussions have taken place with each of the relevant schools and the relevant planning has been completed. Mentoring sessions will not commence until after 14th September 2020.

At the moment, there are only 6 BG schools that the mentors will be linking with and there will be no more than one mentor attending an allocated school.

Operation Encompass

A summary of the current processes associated with Operation Encompass is detailed below:

Interim Process:
- Police will e-mail Operation Encompass information to the nominated education safeguarding representative(s) in each Council area via a secure, designated Operation Encompass e-mail address
- This designated e-mail address is monitored and managed Monday to Friday by nominated education safeguarding representative(s) before the start of the school day
- The representative who receives the information will check or add the school name(s) for the stated child or children on the PPN
- This representative will securely email the information to the school's Designated Safeguarding Person (Key Adult), prior to the start of the school day. The email with have a 'read receipt' attached. The DSP will take the necessary action to support the child or young person (see below for further advice)
- All information will be recorded, stored and secured in line with existing child safeguarding process.

Weekend notifications
- To ensure that schools are aware of any children that have experienced domestic abuse over the weekend, the operation encompass process will continue as stated above.
- Councils will be emailed alerts on a Saturday and Sunday morning
- On a Monday morning, Councils may have alerts from Saturday, Sunday and Monday to email to the relevant schools. These emails will include any incidents that have occurred between 7am Friday - 7am Monday.

For more information, please refer to the following updated detailed guidance:

OE School 'interim' guidance Jan 2019 B

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4.4 Wellbeing and Healthy Schools

Health and Wellbeing of Learners

In the run up to school re-opening, a range of information has been shared with schools both via the EAS and directly. These included from the EAS:

- 'The 5 R's to Recovery' playlist
- 'W.E.L.L. Plan'
- 'All Together Now' playlist

And from the Educational Psychology Service:

- 'Psychologically-informed support for when schools re-open'. (This was developed as a joint piece of work with Health and Social Services and will be promoted further by your Educational Psychologist in September.)
- 'Managing Our Worries'
- 'Home School Communications'
- 'Transition Back to School'

Learning should support learners' mental, emotional, physical and social wellbeing as well as recognising the importance of outdoor learning and play. Well-being is a critical enabler of learning: learners who are not content, safe and secure will not learn effectively.

As learners spend more time at their school or setting, learner and staff well-being will continue to be a key concern. The ongoing pandemic means that learners may continue to spend varying amounts of time learning remotely. Learners who are not content, safe and secure will not learn effectively. Practitioners should continue to focus on supporting well-being as a foundation for learning.

Practitioners will need to have particular regard for learners who are unable to attend a school or setting at any point in time and how they can be supported remotely.

Education Psychology Service

Educational Psychologists will be in touch with ALNCos in September 2020 to arrange planning meetings which will take place via Microsoft TEAMS. The agenda for the planning meetings, currently being finalised, will be provided to ALNCos at the start of autumn term. The work to be undertaken during the year will be agreed at the planning meeting.
Given present uncertainty about the practicalities of school visits, it is likely that, for the first term, this will consist of a blended approach, determined by the nature of the work agreed.

Please see attached psychologically –informed support for when schools re-open:

BG
Psych_Support_Schc

GSABG_cefnogi_ail
agor_ysgolion.docx

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Healthy Schools

Healthy Schools Officers nationally, working with Public Health Wales, have identified three areas of focus for September 2020 and three working groups have been established to prepare for September 2020. The three areas of focus are:

- Infection Prevention Control Working Group
- Mental and Emotional Health and Wellbeing Working Group
- Physical Activity (Active travel, outdoor learning) Working Group

The role of each group will be to start pulling together a 'road map' of priorities to support a whole school/setting approach in that focus area, along with collating information about resources/programmes from teams across Wales. More information will be available as this work progresses and Shan Palmeria will be able to provide a full update in September 2020.

4.5 Childcare

Firstly, it is important to note that there is no requirement for schools to offer keyworker childcare provision during the autumn term 2020. Welsh Government has, however, indicated that this could be subject to review in line with the potential for a second outbreak.

Welsh Government issued guidance to the childcare sector to enable them to re-open and extend their provision from keyworker only provision in June 2020. The guidance, which has subsequently been updated this month (August 2020), outlines the measures childcare providers need to put in place to ensure their provision is safe for children, staff and parents and includes advice on: prevention; minimising contacts; use of outdoor space; infection prevention and control; hand hygiene; PPE; risk assessment; action to be taken in the event of a child becoming ill; decontamination and cleaning.

The former requirement that children were to be cared for in bubbles of 8 has been removed, but settings will have to be able to demonstrate that children are cared for in consistent groups to minimise social contacts. Providers can decide for themselves how many children they feel safely able to care for, taking account of their registered numbers, the space available to them and the need for staff to socially distance from one another. There is flexibility under this guidance for children to attend more than one setting, so wraparound care is now allowed, however, there is an expectation that providers will work with parents, schools and potentially other settings to measure and mitigate against risks with an expectation that children will be cared for in consistent groups. The guidance suggests ways consistent groups could operate within childcare settings by organising children into groups related to their class, year group or school and suggests providers need to work with parents and schools to discuss risks and how to manage them.

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Settings providing care to school-aged children are also required to consider the guidance for schools and form a judgement on which measures are most appropriate and relevant to their particular operating model.

All childcare settings will have risk assessments to show how they are operating under the current restrictions, taking account of guidance available, outlining measures they are taking to keep their provision safe. The Early Years Childcare and Play team offer advice and support to the sector and can assist with any identified issues.

https://gov.wales/protective-measures-childcare-settings-keep-childcare-safe#:~:text=Although%20the%20protective%20measures%20recommended%20in%20this%20guidance,school%20and%20holiday%20schemes%2C%20both%20registered%20and%20unregistered.

4.6 Educational Trips and Visits

Outdoor Learning and Educational Visits

It has been advised for schools not to use venues which involve travel. However, learning outdoors has many educational and health benefits. During the pandemic, it also provides opportunities for 'social distancing' and fresh air, and so schools should consider how they can maximise the amount of time that children and young people spend outdoors.

In addition to using their own playgrounds and gardens, many schools routinely use outdoor areas adjacent to and nearby the school for educational activities, sometimes designated as a 'Local Learning Area'. It should be possible to continue to use most venues that are in walking distance, within current limitations. It might also be possible to negotiate temporary exclusive use of an outdoor area close to an establishment, with the landowner.

Planning and Managing Activities during the Pandemic

Schools should consider avoiding activities which have a high likelihood of minor injuries, so as to reduce the need for first aid, close contact with participants, or visits to hospital.

If the planned activity is in an area open to the public, schools should consider carefully how they will ensure that the group is isolated from the public. Venues should be selected to minimise any possible interaction with the public.

During some activities, it may be possible to designate or mark out 'zones' within which individual participant's work, to avoid contact between them.

It is important to keep parents informed about plans and the precautions schools are taking, both indoors and outdoors, as they will naturally be concerned.

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Hygiene and Outdoor Learning

The same attention should be given to hygiene when outdoors as when indoors. For example:

- Regularly washing/sanitising hands including when going outside, before and after touching shared objects such as activity equipment, before eating and after using the toilet
- Avoiding touching objects shared by the public – for example, a member of staff could hold a gate open to avoid everyone touching it
- Avoiding activities which involve touching each other (e.g. holding hands)
- Sanitising equipment before it is used.

Consider carrying, or having easily available, antiseptic hand gel, antiseptic wipes, tissues, bags for waste, gloves and face masks and possibly disposable aprons and eye protection, in case staff need to administer first aid or give direct support or personal care to a participant.

Be aware that antibacterial hand gel usually contains a high proportion of alcohol, and could therefore be a temptation for abuse by some young people. It should be used under close staff supervision.

Overseas and Domestic Visits

Current government travel guidance for educational settings advises against all overseas and domestic visits for children under 18. Government advice is also to avoid public transport and unnecessary journeys. It is, therefore, not advisable to use venues which involve travel.

When booking future visits schools are asked to please ensure that they consider insurance, the Council can advise on this. For more information, please contact:

Penny Jones: penny.jones@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

4.7 Use of Leisure Facilities

Leisure Supporting Education

Sport Centres across Blaenau Gwent have been closed since 23rd March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and are now in the first phase of reopening. The Leisure Trust has worked to create a flexible reopening model which will allow leisure services to start the rebuilding phase whilst not hindering access to schools for their physical education requirements.

One way systems have been created throughout the centres and whilst we continue to live with the threat of COVID-19 this will need to be adhered to by both the public and all school

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attendees. Sanitising stations are situated in every section of the building and strict cleanliness rules have been put in place to ensure that the equipment is placed back in the correct position and kept as clean and sanitised as possible. These measures will be shared with the schools and there will be an expectation that everyone will abide by them for the safety of all the centre users. If and when schools are allowed to use sports centres the responsibilities for COVID-19 risk management will have to be clearly defined, for example the supervision of pupils will fall entirely within the school's responsibility.

Whilst the majority of equipment is readily available the Trust has had to decommission some to allow for social distancing within the facilities, however, the Trust will be reviewing the latest Welsh Government guidance on a weekly basis to return to full activity as soon as possible.

By the time the schools return for the new academic year the trust will be in the 4th week of reopening. Further guidance on activities including swimming is anticipated within the next 2 weeks. A further update will be provided once arrangements have been confirmed.

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