

Public Document Pack



The following reports are Information Items for the Education Scrutiny Committee.

- 1 Safeguarding.
- 2 Support and Challenge Update - Celebrate, Share, Support and Refine Pilot and Striking the Balance: A Regional Approach.



EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – INFORMATION ITEM

SUBJECT: SAFEGUARDING

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION AND
CORPORATE SERVICES**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members regarding safeguarding developments in 2020/2021.

2. SUMMARY

2.1 Safeguarding children and young people is a key statutory duty of the Council and is embodied in the Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act 2014.

2.2 The Local Authority (LA) has clear policies and procedures linked to safeguarding children in education services. Safeguarding underpins priorities within the Directorate Plan (2018 – 2023) and all related plans and reflects the introduction of the Wales Safeguarding Procedures (2019) within its principles and practices.

2.3 The LA works in partnership with Children's Services, Health, Police, education providers, parents/carers and other partners to ensure that there is a robust approach towards safeguarding arrangements.

2.4 The LA has a pivotal role in safeguarding activities at a national, regional and local level for example the National Safeguarding in Education Group (SEG), and the regional South East Wales Consortium (SEWC) SEG. This ensures that policy and practice are well informed.

2.5 In January 2021, the new multi-agency Safeguarding Hub was introduced to IAA; education is an integral part of this system when safeguarding concerns are received. Schools/education settings are required to take part in strategy discussions to share pertinent information and contribute to the multi-agency safety planning for children who are deemed vulnerable or 'at risk'.

2.6 The LA has a clear system of self-evaluation in relation to safeguarding (linked to ESTYN guidance and broader self-evaluation processes). This informs developments in processes and practice.

- 2.7 The LA Safeguarding Policy for schools/education settings directly reflects the 'Keeping Learners Safe' Circular 270/2021.
- 2.8 Under COVID-19, a number of protocols and procedures have been implemented to adapt to the new way of working, for example updated guidance for schools regarding safeguarding responsibilities during lock down, schools' blended learning policy, live streaming/on-line learning and risk assessments. The LA has adopted the Welsh Government guidance and expectations in relation to supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged learners. Hubs were offered to the most vulnerable learners. Regular online surgeries for Head Teachers have been held to explore any COVID 19 pandemic related issues that currently impact education settings.
- 2.9 Allegations against professionals are managed robustly with engagement from education, social services, HR and other relevant professionals.
- 2.10 The LA provides robust training and support to schools/education settings, LEI & Governors. The LA has revised the model of training for schools recognising the need to ensure that there is a sustainable model in place that will enhance the capacity for schools to effectively manage safeguarding issues.
- 2.11 There are robust monitoring arrangements in place with regards to the scrutiny of physical intervention forms. This ensures that the LA exercises its duty of care in relation to pupils and staff members.
- 2.12 Operation Encompass alerts from Police are shared with schools daily in order that the wellbeing of learners is adequately supported in schools following a domestic incident.
- 2.13 There are robust systems in place regarding the recording and monitoring of discriminatory incidents. Guidance is updated to reflect any new categories as they are defined. The LA has been recognised by Stonewall as developing good practice in this area.
- 2.14 The LA has a good system of audit for schools and maintained child care settings to audit their responses to safeguarding responsibilities. Additional checks are built into this process to ensure that the audits themselves are robust, which now align with the 'Keeping Learners Safe' model of audit and scrutiny. Any actions arising from the audits are undertaken and checked by managers.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Members are requested to note the contents of the report.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Safeguarding is a priority and it is important that Members are apprised of relevant work undertaken in this area.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 Safeguarding children and young people is a key statutory duty of the Council and is embodied in the Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act 2014. Processes and

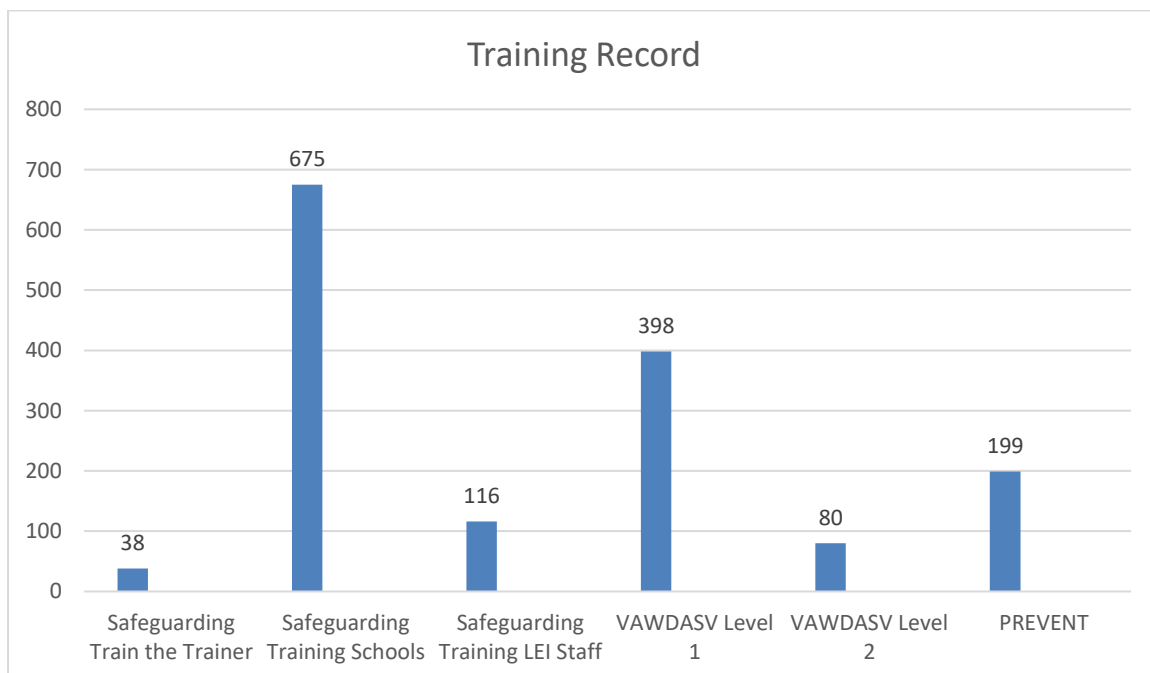
procedures are identified within the Wales Safeguarding Procedures (previously All Wales Child Protection Procedures).

- 5.2 The LA has a clear definition of safeguarding linked to the Wales Safeguarding Procedures and clearly defined responsibilities as outlined in the Corporate Policy including areas such as Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDA&SV) and Counter-terrorism and risk of radicalisation (Prevent)
- 5.3 Safeguarding is a priority in the Education and Corporate Services Directorate and is central to priorities in the Education Plan for 2018 – 2023.
- 5.4 Safeguarding runs as a theme through the Education Directorate Service Improvement Plan which is reviewed annually. This includes a review of roles and responsibilities linked to the Additional Learning Needs and Tribunal Act 2018 and the associated changes to the Social Services and Wellbeing Act (Wales) 2014 Part 4.
- 5.5 The LA has a clear Corporate Policy for Safeguarding outlining the intention of the council in relation to safeguarding. As part of the Council's commitment to safeguarding, we work proactively with our partners under the auspices of the Gwent Safeguarding Board to ensure that statutory guidance is followed, awareness and good practice is promoted and the workforce practices safely and effectively.
- 5.6 The LA makes effective contributions to the regional Gwent Safeguarding Board Subgroups, CSA National Action Plan, as well as Corporate Safeguarding Board, Local Safeguarding Network and the Designated Safeguarding Officer practice development group.
- 5.7 The LA have contributed to a number of revised protocols for emerging broader safeguarding issues, such as the Gwent wide Child Exploitation Toolkit (replaces the SERAF scoring), are working closely with Stonewall/Umbrella regarding the policy around LGBTQ and have representation on Child Sexual Abuse National Action Plan Task & Finish Group.
- 5.8 Each of the LAs across South East Wales Consortia (SEWC) is represented at the National Safeguarding Education Group (SEG). Engagement in this group facilitates regional and local developments. The SEWC SEG meets to promote consistency, share good practice and contribute to national consultations.
- 5.9 There is excellent partnership working across Education, Children's Services and other key stakeholders in safeguarding to ensure that there is a robust approach towards safeguarding arrangements. There is on-going representation from education in the broader context, in relation to Multi Agency Risk Assessment Committee meeting (MARAC), Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation meeting (MASE), Case Practice Review's (CPR'), Procedural Response to Unexpected Deaths In Childhood (PRUDIC) and Operation Encompass Task & Finish Group.
- 5.10 Education is an integral part to the new multi-agency Safeguarding Hub, which sits within IAA. Schools/education settings are required to take part in strategy discussions to share pertinent information and contribute to the multi-agency safety planning. Feedback from management within IAA suggests that education representation within this process has been pivotal in this approach.
- 5.11 Designated managers (Lead for Inclusion and ALN and Children's Safeguarding Service Manager) work closely together to ensure that there is consistency across the services in terms of advice, support, training and challenge. The managers also fulfil

an auditing role ensuring an additional layer of evaluation and challenge where necessary, e.g. sampling school audits, monitoring child protection referrals and practitioner concerns.

- 5.12 The LA provides effective advice regarding individual needs via the Information, Assistance and Advice Team (IAA), Child Protection Coordinator, Lead for Safeguarding in Education, Education Safeguarding Coordinator, and HR (where appropriate). The role of the Education Safeguarding Coordinator will continue to ensure there is an appropriate level of ongoing support and guidance to schools, LEI and Youth Services in relation to safeguarding and provide challenge where necessary. The CLA Co-ordinator will ensure there is clear communication with all settings regarding improving outcomes for looked after children.
- 5.13 The LA has a clear Safeguarding Children in Schools/Education Settings Policy, adopted by all schools/settings in the Borough; this is currently under review and will be circulated by the end of April 2021. This directly reflects 'Keeping Learners Safe' Circular 270/2021. Scrutiny of Estyn school inspection reports indicate that there are appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures in place in schools in Caerphilly.
- 5.14 The local authority manages its responsibilities for safe recruitment through pre-employment checks for local authority staff, and for all school staff (including any directly recruited and paid through the school). The revised Safer Recruitment Policy (agreed January 2021) places greater emphasis on safeguarding responsibilities for recruiting officers.
- 5.15 The LA has a robust process of self-evaluation and specifically follows the Estyn framework for self-evaluation of safeguarding within education. There is also a Corporate safeguarding assessment tool and associated action plan. The LA's contribution to this reflects the areas for development identified within the education self-evaluation. The Corporate safeguarding self- assessment was completed in January 2021.
- 5.16 During the first phase of the pandemic the LA had responsibility, under COVID guidance, for ensuring that arrangements for the learners who were identified as vulnerable, were appropriate and focused on promoting the safety and welfare. In accordance with the principle that children were safer at home unless there was clear information to suggest otherwise, hubs were implemented to support children who were on the child protection register, had care and support plans, mental health needs or Statements of Special Educational Needs.
- 5.17 Allegations against professionals are managed robustly with engagement from Education, Social Services, HR and other relevant professionals. Processes and decision making are reviewed on a half termly basis, which informs the evaluation of thematic trends and learning outcomes. Following allegations schools are supported by the LA to ensure that disciplinary investigations are conducted robustly. Education Safeguarding also support with bespoke training and reflective practice sessions to improve outcomes and learning. Commissioned providers or agencies are also provided with clear guidance regarding the expectation of disciplinary investigations.
- 5.18 Working with partners in Social Services training materials have been revised and a '*train the trainer*' model for schools and education settings have been implemented since January 2020. The LA has recognised the need to review the method of delivery to ensure that there is a sustainable model in place that will enhance the capacity for schools to effectively manage safeguarding issues.

- 5.19 Robust & bespoke Tier 2 equivalent Safeguarding training is delivered to all Learning Education and Inclusions staff, teaching and non-teaching staff, governors and other partners. All schools/settings are up to date with their safeguarding training currently. There is a continued commitment to ensure all schools/education settings/LEI/Youth Services staff are up to date with Corporate/Government recommended/mandatory training.
- 5.20 The Education Safeguarding Coordinator is currently developing specific DSP training, which is aligned with SEG/other Local Authorities, so this can be rolled out in addition to the Level 2 equivalent Safeguarding training. This will be aimed at school's SLT members to enhance their knowledge of local/regional guidance/legislation and wider safeguarding issues.
- 5.21 Within the broad remit of safeguarding there are several key areas of focus such as Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDA&SV) and Counter-terrorism and risk of radicalisation (Prevent). Schools/education setting staff are encouraged to complete the mandatory VAWDASV Level 1 training and front facing staff will complete Level 2 Ask & Act live virtual training sessions. PREVENT online training sessions have also been provided to education staff. Education is represented at strategic groups such as the Whole School Approach to VAWDASV & Operation Encompass Task & Finish Group to ensure that senior managers are well informed of the LA's responsibilities and that information is cascaded to all staff. The safeguarding policy for schools also reflects this key information.
- 5.22 Training data since January 2020



- 5.23 Evaluations are undertaken following each training; evaluation forms are received by Education Safeguarding to record/evaluate the views of those attending. Evaluation forms received indicated that the objectives, usefulness, standard and use of anti-discriminatory practice by the trainer were in the range of 'excellent' or 'completely met'.

- 5.24 Learning Education and Inclusion staff, Head Teachers and Designated Safeguarding Persons (DSP) are regularly updated by the Education Safeguarding Coordinator of relevant training resources and available safeguarding courses e.g. Stop it Now, County Lines, Human Trafficking, Safety On-line, Hwb on-line courses and Wales Safeguarding Procedures Champion training. All schools/settings are aware that further information/courses can be accessed via the Gwent Safeguarding Board.
- 5.25 There is a robust system for recording and monitoring physical interventions. The LA has adopted the Team Teach model of de-escalation and restricted physical intervention. There is an effective process for monitoring incidents of physical intervention and restraint in schools/settings. There are clear criteria to trigger follow up visits with schools. Physical interventions are received by Education Safeguarding on the day the intervention takes place; these are subsequently reviewed on a weekly basis by Education Safeguarding Coordinator and Behaviour Support to ensure the correct Team Teach approaches are used and any safeguarding concerns are identified/followed up. Schools are regularly contacted for clarity and offered guidance/advice from a safeguarding or Team Teach perspective.
- 5.26 During 2019 /20 the LA received 226 restrictive physical intervention forms. This is compared to 514 in 2018 /19. In the academic year 2020 / 21 to date (24th March 21), there have been 119 physical intervention forms received.
- Of these performance indicators:
- 27.73% Primary
 - 0.84% Secondary
 - 0% EOTAS
 - 66.39% SRB's
 - 5.04% Special School
- NB. The reduced number of PI's in 2019/20 academic year are largely affected by the onset of COVID-19 in March where schools were closed for a number of months, therefore limited direct contact with children.*
- 5.27 In partnership with Gwent Police, the LA has engaged with Operation Encompass since 2019, regularly attending quarterly Task & Finish Groups. The LA has developed a robust process of ensuring that schools receive daily information regarding incidents of domestic abuse so that they are able to fully support the needs of their learners in a safe environment; feedback continue to indicate that this is welcomed by schools and enables them to identify potentially vulnerable pupils. The LA contributes to the regional group to review current practice and identify areas for future development. The performance data available to the LA will be used to inform local developments.
- 5.28 There is a robust system for recording and monitoring a range of discriminatory incidents requiring schools to submit returns to the LA on a termly basis which are scrutinised by LA officers. This is updated with any additional characteristics linked to discrimination as required. Schools are offered support and guidance as required.
- 5.29 The LA has a good system of audit for schools and maintained child care settings to examine their responses to safeguarding responsibilities. This aligns with the 'Keeping Learners Safe' model of audit. Additional checks are built into this process to ensure that the audits themselves are robust. The LA rates audits using a traffic light system and undertakes follow up actions with schools as required. Any actions arising from the audits are undertaken and checked by managers. All schools are now rated as green.

5.30 **Conclusion**

5.31 Safeguarding underpins all priorities within the LA. The LA contributes to national and regional groups to ensure up to date practice across the Education Directorate and schools. There are several areas of focus for the work of education safeguarding including advice and support, training, audit, and support for professional concerns.

6. **ASSUMPTIONS**

6.1 In considering the recommendations the following assumptions have been made:

- Safeguarding children and young people is a key statutory duty of the Council and as such must be reported to scrutiny to ensure that members are kept informed.

7. **SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

7.1 This report provides information and therefore an integrated impact assessment has not be completed at this time.

8. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 There are no financial implications.

9. **PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are no personnel implications.

10. **CONSULTATIONS**

10.1 The report reflects the views of the consultees based on consultations undertaken to date.

11. **STATUTORY POWER**

11.1 Social Services and Wellbeing Act
Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
Education (Wales) Act 2014
Education Act 1996 - Equality Act 2010
Additional Learning Needs and Tribunal Act (2018)

Author

Sarah Ellis, Lead for Inclusion and ALN (elliss@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Mandy Morris, Education Safeguarding Coordinator (morrin4@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Consultees:

Christina Harray, Chief Executive

Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director, Education and Corporate Services
Dave Street, Corporate Director Social Services
Keri Cole, Chief Education Officer
Rob Tranter, Head of Legal Services
Steve Harris, Head of Corporate Finance
Sue Richards, Head of Education Planning & Strategy
Sarah Mutch, Early Years Manager
Jane Southcombe, Finance Manager
Paul Warren, Lead for School Improvement
Councillor Teresa Parry, Chair Education for Life Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Carol Andrews, Vice Chair Education for Life Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Ross Whiting, Cabinet Member for Education & Achievement
Ros Roberts, Business Improvement Manager
Kath Beaven, Lead for Wellbeing and Equity (EAS)
Nicola Barrett, Service Manager
Lisa Downey, HR Service Manager
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services



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EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 17TH MAY 2021

SUBJECT: SUPPORT AND CHALLENGE UPDATE - CELEBRATE, SHARE,
SUPPORT AND REFINE PILOT AND STRIKING THE BALANCE: A
REGIONAL APPROACH

REPORT BY: JULIE WOOD, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, EAS

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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of the strategic approaches that EAS have developed to support schools and settings during the pandemic.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The region has implemented a strategic and staged approach to supporting schools in the delivery of distance and blended learning. Following discussions with the regional Headteacher strategy group there was an understanding from both the LAs and EAS that the next stage would be to work alongside schools to see first-hand examples of practice to celebrate, support, share and refine (CSSR) their distance and blended learning provision. 34 schools from across the region agreed to work with the EAS to develop a pilot approach. The purpose of this approach was to continue to share the good practice that exists across the region, using the distance and blended learning website as a mechanism to extend collaborative working. During the meetings, schools were also asked to reflect on the process of the CSSR approach and provide any feedback to the team. Feedback from schools and the EAS CSSR teams has been used to shape the regional approach moving forward for the remainder of the spring and summer terms when it is likely that there will still be periods where groups of learners will not be in school and will need to access distance and blended learning.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Members are asked to receive the report for information and take the opportunity to comment.

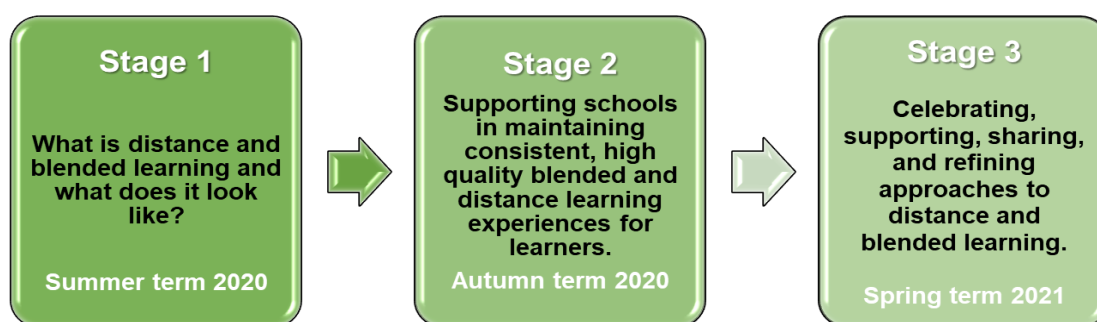
4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 This report is for information only.

5. THE REPORT

Review of Celebrate, Share, Support and Refine Pilot

- 5.1 The region has implemented a strategic and staged approach to supporting schools in the delivery of distance and blended learning, depicted in the diagram below. There is not a one size fits all model and schools have adopted different approaches which are best suited to the needs and circumstances of their school communities. The EAS recognises that there is no blueprint for this work and there is a need for collaborative learning.



Stage 3: Celebrating, supporting, sharing, and refining (CSSR) approaches to distance and blended learning (Spring term 2021)

- 5.2 Following discussions with the regional Headteacher strategy group there was an understanding from both the LA and EAS that the next stage would be to work alongside schools to see first-hand examples of practice from the last 11 months to celebrate, support, share and refine their distance and blended learning provision within a safe environment. 34 schools from across the region agreed to work with the EAS to develop a pilot approach. The process involved the setting up of individual meetings with each school, all a one-hour duration. The focus of the discussions in these meetings was on celebrating, supporting, sharing, and refining the approaches taken within the Covid period.
- 5.3 The purpose of this approach was to continue to share the good practice that exists across the region, using the distance and blended learning website as a mechanism to extend collaborative working.
- 5.4 The pilot approach set out to:
- Determine the most appropriate ways of undertaking virtual meetings to see examples of learning without increasing workload.
 - Ensure that the tone and content of the meetings are collaborative, sensitive, supportive and beneficial for the school.
 - Help the region to fully understand the challenges that practitioners are facing to help shape regional support.
 - Help to shape the discussions so that there is an appropriate balance between celebrating, supporting, sharing and refining.
 - Exemplify the full range of teaching strategies that are being utilised to support learning.
 - Enable schools to best determine the types of learning that they would like to share during the meetings.

- 5.5 The pilot commenced in January 2021 and concluded at February half-term 2021. The focus of each meeting centred around wellbeing of all, leadership and governance, professional learning and curriculum and pedagogy. Each school was sent a set of prompts or questions for consideration around each of these aspects. In CCBC, 5 schools were engaged in the pilot programme:
- :
- Ystrad Mynach Primary
 - Newbridge School
 - Blackwood Primary
 - Hendredenny Park Primary
 - Waunfawr Primary
- 5.6 Each school was contacted by a CSSR coordinator (Assistant Director or Principal Challenge Adviser) and sent a list of reflection questions.
- 5.7 During the meetings, schools were also asked to reflect on the process of the CSSR approach and provide any feedback to the team. At each meeting there was a minimum of three EAS staff present, invited members of the LA (as determined with each LA) and as many school staff as leaders felt appropriate. Each meeting was conducted virtually via Microsoft Teams with the intended duration of the meeting being one hour.
- 5.8 Each virtual discussion was captured on an overview matrix, with each EAS team member contributing. This document was then shared back with the school for comment, amendments, and additions. An example completed matrix has been included for information as Appendix B.
- 5.9 Feedback from schools and the EAS CSSR teams has been used to shape the regional approach moving forward for the remainder of the spring and summer terms when it is likely that there will still be periods where groups of learners will not be in school and will need to access distance and blended learning.
- 5.10 The outcomes of discussions with schools are being used to discuss how they will continue to build upon learning from this period to enhance teaching and learning moving forward and inform their school improvement priorities for 2021-2022.

Pilot Analysis

- 5.11 The pilot asked range of questions for schools to provide description of their approaches. Questions along with exemplification answers are provided below
- 5.12 What strategies / approaches are the most appropriate ways of undertaking virtual meetings to see examples of learning without increasing workload? In the best examples:
- Headteachers used the four areas from the matrix to structure discussion, this was helpful to keep the meeting on point and well structured.
 - Headteachers brought SLT members and practitioners to the meeting. This helped to see all aspects of provision from a range of perspectives and gave a good deal of depth to the conversations.
 - Something visual on screen helped to shape the conversation and helped the school to keep discussions focused and organised.

- There were opportunities to look at the work of learners and the learner experience. For example, Exemplifying the situation as a learner ‘a week in the life of a learner’, focusing on the learner experience was particularly effective.
- Inclusion of the school’s CA and /or LNS school has helped information sharing and supported aspects of the school’s work they wished to refine.

5.14 How have we ensured that the tone and content of the meetings are collaborative, sensitive, supportive, and beneficial for the school? In the best examples.

- Schools have ‘owned’ the meetings and have controlled the agenda.
- Balancing the meeting with positive feedback and constructive questioning and observations as the meeting progresses has been helpful.
- An EAS acknowledgement that the regional consortium is learning and that EAS and LA staff are not experiencing this on the ground – this has helped schools ensure they have adopted the ‘expert on the ground’ approach.
- As meetings were not set to follow a fixed agenda, the EAS have allowed the flow of conversation.
- The tone of the meetings has been sensitive and follow up reports are heavily focused on celebrating and sharing of the effective practice.
- Headteachers have been keen to showcase what they are doing.
- Meetings have aligned suitably to the #EncourageApplaudShare approach on Twitter. Meetings have been celebrated by schools on Twitter

5.15 How has the process helped the region to fully understand the challenges that practitioners are facing in order to help shape regional support? In the best examples:

- Schools have provided constructive feedback on the regional support e.g. school development plan, masterclasses, website, flexibility of professional learning and overall many have engaged and found these useful.
- The EAS has developed awareness of strengths / areas for further development of schools in current operation and as a result signposted schools to support where required.
- The prompt questions provided a good structure and allowed schools to shape their thinking and reflect on their provision in four key areas: wellbeing and equity, curriculum and pedagogy, leadership and governance and professional learning.
- Members of the SLT and practitioners have been in attendance to support the discussion and provide a rounded picture of the provision.
- The discussions have further provided the region with a good understanding of the professional learning needs of schools and what has been beneficial e.g. support with live lessons, pedagogical approaches to learning though the blend.

5.16 Through discussions with the school did we achieve an appropriate balance between celebrating, supporting, sharing and refining – exemplify? In the best examples:

- There has been a strong emphasis on celebration as this has been the focus of school presentations and information shared by schools.
- Schools have identified things that they are developing, changing or refining.

- Effective practice based on presentations and discussion has been identified for sharing more widely e.g. Masterclass sessions, website, briefings for Elected Members.
- Schools used opportunities through Twitter to celebrate – #EncourageApplaudShare and have made reference to the CSSR process in their Tweets.

5.17 How did the meetings exemplify the full range of teaching strategies that are being utilised to support learning? In the best examples:

- Schools have spoken in detail about the teaching strategies they have used, particularly in relation to the number of effective strategies and scope of technology being used e.g. for differentiation, feedback.
- Where the pedagogy has been aligned strongly with an effective pre-existing teaching and learning strategy, it was exemplified how this has been adapted to the blended learning provision successfully.
- Use of technology was driven by the pedagogical approach it was required to support.
- Schools exemplified their practice with opportunities to look at learners work and the learner experience.

5.18 How did the process enable schools to best determine the types of learning that they would like to share during the meetings? In the best examples:

- Schools focused significantly on aspects of their provision that they wished to celebrate. The opportunity to discuss their 'learning journeys' have been evident. A constant process of review, reflect and refine has been a common theme.

Key and Emerging Themes

Wellbeing and Equity

5.19 A range of themes emerged related to Wellbeing and Equity, in particular:

- Wellbeing of staff, learners, community has been and continues to be a central focus for nearly all schools throughout the entire period.
- Communicating with all stakeholders has been a priority for nearly all schools.
- Schools adopted the hashtag 'over communicate with clarity' as a mantra during this time.
- Significant strengthening of relationships with parents has been demonstrated.
- Significant strengthening of relationships with the wider school community has been demonstrated with many schools going far beyond their role as educational setting to ensure that welfare issues in the community were also addressed e.g. delivering food parcels,
- Schools stated that they feel know their learners and their families more extensively now than pre- Covid.
- Schools have adapted and developed their tracking systems since the start of the pandemic.

- Schools with detailed and purposeful tracking of the engagement of learners has led to positive interventions and increased communication with families, ensuring that engagement of targeted learners has improved.
- Schools and settings have continued to work with partner organisations supporting the most vulnerable families.
- The quality of learning experiences for digitally excluded learners has developed over time which has resulted in better engagement in learning.

Curriculum and Pedagogy

5.20 A range of themes emerged related to Curriculum and Pedagogy, in particular:

- Schools that had a well-established strategy for teaching and learning pre-Covid were able to adapt these principles to a distance and blended learning context.
- There has been an exponential growth in the use of technology to support pedagogical approaches over the last 11 months.
- Use of technology has been selected on the basis that it supported a particular pedagogical approach e.g. use of Jamboard for collaborative working.
- Live teaching and check in opportunities have increased engagement in learning when learners are working remotely.
- Schools who moved to live teaching very early on (March /April 2020) noted immediate benefits in relation to learner engagement).
- Schools that spent significant periods of time preparing learners, staff and parents prior to lockdown episodes for remote learning were able to switch to blended learning approaches much more easily than those who did not prepare with the same degree of depth.
- Schools have adopted a blend of approaches to planning learning experiences incorporating both synchronous and asynchronous methodology.
- Schools have kept opportunities to enhance the curriculum e.g. Online music lessons by sending home musical instruments.
- Practice has been research informed.
- In many schools, the use of technology has advanced exponentially and this raises questions regarding planning for progression of digital competency skills as learners transfer from one phase to another, particularly from primary into secondary.
- The offer to learners in the spring term 2021 is considerably more sophisticated and comprehensive than that provided in the original lock down in 2020.

Leadership and Governance

5.21 A range of themes emerged related to Leadership and Governance, in particular:

- Where practice has been more effective, senior leaders have identified key leaders within the school to support distance and blended learning.
- Leaders at all levels were learning together, with no blueprint for dealing with COVID. Effective distributed leadership enabled key leaders to coordinate and provide support appropriately.
- Leaders looked beyond their schools and kept connected with wider networks when developing their D&B learning provision.

- Leaders were outward looking, but also looked inward to identify best practice and what was working well. (A rapid period of action-based research and critical enquiry).
- Leaders have developed the expertise of governors to understand how they have responded to the COVID pandemic e.g. Governors were directly involved in the drawing up of the distance and blended learning policy and Governors meet as part of a sub-committee to consider the schools' distance and blended learning provision.
- Quality assurance of the quality of teaching and learning and the learner experience has been approached appropriately and constructively throughout the period.
- Constant refinements of approaches to distance and blended learning have been made throughout the period and reflective leaders have kept engaged with stakeholders to gauge how successful their provision has been in meeting the needs of all their learners

Professional Learning

5.22 A range of themes emerged related to Professional Learning, in particular:

- Professional learning has been given high priority during the pandemic.
- There has been a significant focus on PL, particularly related to distance and blended learning. Priority has been given to the use of technology to support learning and to track learner engagement.
- PL has been offered in a structured way to parents, to support them in assisting their child to access BL.
- Schools have maintained a strategic approach to their PL whilst being agile and responsive to the need for 'Just In Time' PL needed during this time.
- PL has been accessed across the widest regional offer with schools using the opportunity to engage in wider regional networks.
- Schools who had effectively engaged in PL around digital skills prior to the pandemic benefited significantly.

Overarching Pilot Outcomes:

5.23 There were also a number of overarching themes, in particular:

- The process has helped to develop trust, openness, and honesty with schools.
- Working together with schools in an open and transparent way has helped to lay the foundations for future working and partnership.
- Schools have found this process useful to self-reflect on their own provision.
- 'Big picture' themes for the region have emerged in terms of common approaches that have proved successful, e.g. ways of supporting vulnerable pupils and families.

Rollout of CSSR to all Schools

5.24 The CSSR rollout began with a virtual conference in March with National and International speakers including Dr Simon Breakspear and Lucy Crehan, as well as workshops from a range of regional schools including Blackwood Primary and

Hendredenny Park Primary Schools. All schools across the region have now been offered the opportunity to undertake a CSSR meeting. The following schools in Caerphilly have participated thus far in the main schedule of CSSR visits:

School	CSSR status
Abercarn Primary	Confirmed
Bedwas Junior	Confirmed
Blackwood Primary	Completed
Coedybrain Primary	Completed
Crumlin HL Primary	Completed
Cwmcarn Primary	Confirmed
Deri Primary	Confirmed
Fleur-de-Lys Primary	Confirmed
Gilfach Fargoed Primary	Confirmed
Hendre Junior	Completed
Hendredenny Park Primary	Completed
Llancaeath Junior	Confirmed
Markham Primary	Confirmed
Nantyparc Primary	Confirmed
Pantside Primary	Completed
Park Primary	Completed
Pengam Primary	Confirmed
Penllwyn Primary	Confirmed
Rhydri Primary	Confirmed
Tynewydd Primary	Confirmed
Waunfawr Primary	Completed
White Rose Primary	Completed
Ystrad Mynach Primary	Completed
Bedwas High	Confirmed
Newbridge School	Completed
Heolddu Comprehensive	Confirmed
Idris Davies 3-18	Confirmed - postponed
Lewis Girls Comprehensive	Confirmed

Feedback from Headteachers

Striking the balance: A Regional approach

- 5.25 The pandemic has reminded us that even in the most challenging of circumstances positive change has been possible. Schools and settings have seized opportunities to explore innovative ways of working and delivering meaningful learning experiences through a creative blended learning approach. These experiences should be built upon to avoid a ‘snap back,’ keeping the positive learning that has been developed during this time.
- 5.26 It is appropriate to acknowledge that the pandemic has not necessarily been a positive time as many have experienced loss and had difficult lockdown experiences including isolation, physical and mental health challenges, and anxiety. Home learning experiences will have been varied. We know that some learners have struggled and, due to a range of factors including digital exclusion, many have not engaged adequately. It is important to note that some children and families are struggling and that they are concerned that they are not making progress.
- 5.27 In contrast to the above however, some learners have excelled, showing that they can self-regulate, work with independence, and adapt to using technology as well as many more skills that they may not have had opportunity to exercise in the period pre-pandemic.
- 5.28 It is important that schools are enabled to effectively evaluate and assess the progress their learners have made during this period. Schools are in the best position to judge the needs of their learners and identify any support that each learner may require in the coming months.
- 5.29 The quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning is key. Where practice uses effective and nuanced formative assessment strategies, schools and settings adapt teaching practice to suit the needs of individual learners and continue to consult and inform their wider stakeholders. These schools use evaluative information and progress data to inform and refine future practice and provision, shaping their priorities for improvement.
- 5.30 The document (Striking the balance: Regional approach, attached as Appendix A) outlines considerations and guidance to support schools and settings for the remainder of this academic year and beyond. The region is aiming to strike an appropriate balance, working with schools and settings to consider the wider learning experiences that have led to positive progress for some, whilst understanding the potential barriers to pupil progress that have developed for others.
- 5.31 The region aims to support the use of a range of positive vocabulary during the next phase, examples of which are included in the table below.

Language to Encourage	Language to be used with caution
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tomorrow will be a good day. • Powering Up • Reconnect • Seize opportunities • Bringing solutions • Co-construction • Moving together • 'a catalyst for far more bespoke learning' • Opportunity and innovation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deficit of learning • Catch-Up • Narrowing the COVID gap • Addressing the deficit • Start learning • Learning lost / loss • Lost learning • School closures
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Wellbeing

5.32 The region has engaged with a mental health expert, Professor Barry Carpenter, who has provided a range of professional learning opportunities for schools and settings to engage with. He recommends five sensible 'levers' that can help a school recover, following a 'systematic, relationships-based approach to reigniting the flame of learning in each child.'

5.33 Wellbeing continues to be at the forefront of the supportive regional approach. Schools and their communities will have had their own unique set of circumstances and will require a bespoke and flexible approach to learning together. Every learner will have differing requirements to engage successfully in their continued learning and to fully integrate into the whole school experience when the time is right.

5.34 We will continue to research, refine, respond and reflect on school needs. Our established networks will continue to be the mechanism of communicating with schools and settings. The Supporting our Schools website will continue to be the 'go to place' for all resources and guidance materials

5.35 An overview of the support that will be provided includes:

- Professional Learning Keynote speakers with guidance on supporting learners returning to fulltime face to face learning.
- Altogether Again Playlist resource
- The Wellbeing Toolkit Programme
- Developing an ACE Friendly School Programme
- A Whole School Approach to Emotion Coaching Techniques
- Embedding Rights of the Child into the curriculum
- Developing a Teaching and Learning Strategy based on a tiered approach for disadvantaged and vulnerable learners
- Health and Wellbeing AoLE Toolkit with supporting PL programme
- Disadvantaged and Vulnerable Learner Lead Programme (Primary and Secondary)
- Relationships and Sexuality Toolkit Programme
- Grant planning support leading up to the academic year 2021-2022
- Intervention Programmes for Support Staff

School Improvement

5.36 The priorities for school improvements are to:

- Continue to work with schools to roll out the 'Celebrate, Support, Share and Refine' (CSSR) model, supporting schools to review and refine their models for blended learning, sharing examples of practice from different schools and settings from within and outside the region.
- Support schools and settings to evaluate the impact the pandemic has had on learners, staff and the school community. As a result, provide bespoke support to schools in line with their identified school improvement priorities, including support for NMS.
- Support schools to refine their Transition arrangements.
- SDP and self-evaluation support leading up to the academic year 2021-2022, including arrangements that align to the new Welsh Government School Improvement Guidance
- Team around the school approach for schools with the highest level of need, collaboration, support for school leaders, bespoke support for improvements to the quality of teaching, assessment and learning.
- The continuation of the Teaching and Learning Strategy project with identified schools.
- Facilitate opportunities for collaborative models / networks of schools working together to support one another with their priorities, including the use of established support networks e.g. LNS

Curriculum Support

5.37 The priorities for school improvement are to:

- Continue to provide access to Programme for Senior Leaders and Headteachers - (Synchronous / Asynchronous options)
- Continue to provide access to Programme for Middle Leaders and Teachers (Synchronous / Asynchronous options) (From Summer term 2021)
- Develop the Secondary curriculum designers' network (to support realisation of the curriculum for Wales)
- Continue to run all existing subject and area-based networks (in partnership with Learning Network Schools)
- Continue to provide Digital professional learning support
- Continue to provide Welsh language support
- Continue to run pre-existing professional learning as advertised in the professional learning calendar

Professional Learning: Leadership & Pedagogy

5.38 The priorities for Professional Learning, Leadership and Pedagogy are to:

- Continue to support the refinement and development of distance and blended learning provision including the work of the task and finish group, masterclasses events and the sharing and networking of effective practice from within and beyond the region.

- Continue to facilitate professional learning that supports schools in developing effective practice in pedagogy in the current context, including areas such as assessment for learning, metacognition, effective synchronous and asynchronous learning design.
- Continue to provide national leadership development opportunities reflecting the challenges of the current pandemic for leaders at all levels including: Middle Leaders, Senior Leaders, Aspiring Headteachers, New and Acting Headteachers and Experienced Headteachers. In addition to regional collaborative networking opportunities.
- Develop a regional approach to the identification of aspiring leaders through a Talent Management Approach.
- Continue to provide a virtual professional learning offer for all those who support statutory induction including newly qualified teachers, school-based induction mentors. In addition to regional collaborative networking opportunities.
- Work with strategic partners to begin shaping a national professional learning induction offer to commence September 2021.
- Developing a regional coaching and mentoring approach to support school improvement.
- Facilitate the teaching assistant learning pathway (TALP) professional learning offer which includes support for induction into the TA role, development for practicing teaching assistants and aspiring Higher Level Teaching Assistants.
- Continue working with strategic partners to support Initial Teacher Education pathways.

Governors

5.38 The priorities for supporting Governors are to:

- Continue to support for the full range of virtual governing body meetings, including Annual General Meetings.
- Support, according to a school's SLA option for virtual statutory committee meetings where required.
- Continued delivery supported by wider teams of the EAS of Virtual Professional Learning Programme for all governors across the region.
- Support Governing Bodies in learning lessons from the Virtual Conference for Governors held in March-April with a focus on Governing Body's strategic leadership role in Celebrating, Sharing, Supporting and Refining, ensuring that our school communities learn lessons from the last 12 months and plan to emerge strengthened.
- Increasing the range of communication our governors beyond the regular email updates, termly newsletters and the Supporting our Schools site, to expand the use of Social media.
- Exploring opportunities for Governors to expand their understanding and use of coaching and mentoring to support school leaders and each other.

Risks

5.39 The unknown impact on pupils through their transition plans and those who would have been sitting examinations this year, particularly those who are vulnerable.

- 5.40 School leaders feeling overwhelmed with information sent in good faith if not controlled or coordinated.
- 5.41 Inability to physically support and guide leadership in schools that require this support.
- 5.42 Some schools not paying due regard to the information that has been made available to support them.

Conclusion

- 5.43 The EAS will continue to implement the strategies outlined within this report. The findings of the CSSR process will continue to help the region to fully understand the challenges that practitioners are facing in order to help shape regional support. The mechanisms for working collaboratively with schools and the LAs via a partnership approach to evaluation and agreeing priorities (similar to that adopted through the CSSR process), will help shape the regional model for school improvement and will help inform the cultural changes necessary to align to Curriculum for Wales and the Welsh Government Guidance on School Improvement.
- 5.28 The Supporting Our Schools website will continue to be the mechanism of sharing practice to support leaders, teachers, teaching assistants, governors, and parents to enable all learners to maintain progress despite the challenges that the pandemic presents.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1. There are no specific assumptions.

7. LINKS TO RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES

- 7.1 The recommended course of action contributes to the following Well-being Goals within the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2016:

- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language
- A globally responsible Wales

- 7.2 **Corporate Plan 2018-2023.**

Please see Caerphilly Strategic Priorities.

8. WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

- 8.1 This report content contributes to the Wellbeing Goals. This report is for consultation only and so does not analyse the 5 ways of working in terms of decision making but it does recognise that going forward support is put in place to improve attainment. This must take a long term view as part of its impact on life chances, employment and

quality of life. Causes within attainment are complex although one of the main ones is deprivation. The measure that is commonly used to measure deprivation is a pupil's eligibility to receive Free School Meals. One of the Council's Well-being Objectives is to 'Improve outcomes for all learners but we want to particularly focus on those vulnerable to underachievement.

9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The EAS have their own Equalities and Welsh Language plans in place. CCBC has therefore not undertaken any specific impact assessment on this information report.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 This work is funded through the EAS Business Plan, therefore there are no specific financial implications.
- 10.2 The CSSR process will now be rolled out during the summer term to all schools and settings. An event to launch this process was held in March 2021 to explore a range of themes including quality assurance, the use of technology to support pedagogical approaches and reflective practice.
- 10.3 Following feedback from the CSSR pilot, practical revisions will be made to the process to include:
- Revising the list of self-evaluation questions for schools to use.
 - Considering mixed phase groupings or peers in CSSR Teams.
 - More planned opportunities to see firsthand learner experiences and learners' work to support discussion.
 - Further considering and agreeing an approach in relation to next steps in cases where the CSSR session has identified support requirements in terms of provision/leadership.
 - Considering how the views of other stakeholders, e.g. Governors are included.
- 10.4 The regional approach, 'Striking the Balance' was shared with headteachers and governors at the end of Spring Term 2021 to seek their views on the approach and the support identified for schools and settings moving forward.

11. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 There are no personnel implications.

12. CONSULTATIONS

- 12.1 The Consultees are noted below:

13. STATUTORY POWER

- 13.1 Local Government Acts 1972 and 2000, Children's Act 2004, Standards and Framework Act 1998

Author: Julie Wood, Assistant Director, EAS

Consultees:

Christina Harray, Chief Executive
Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director of Education and Corporate Services
Dave Street, Corporate Director, Social Services
Councillor Ross Whiting, Cabinet Member for Learning and Achievement
Councillor Teresa Parry, Chair of Education Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Carol Andrews, Vice Chair of Education Scrutiny Committee
Steve Harris, Head of Corporate Services & S151 Officer
Keri Cole, Chief Education Officer
Sue Richards, Head of Education Planning & Strategy
Sarah Ellis, Lead for Inclusion & ALN
Sarah Mutch, Early Years Manager
Paul Warren, Strategic Lead for School Improvement
Jane Southcombe, Financial Services Manager
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services
Anwen Cullinane, Senior Policy Officer, Equalities, Welsh Language & Consultation)
Rob Tranter, Head of Legal Service and Monitoring Officer
Ros Roberts, Business Improvement Officer.

Background Papers:

This section should set out a list of the background papers available for inspection which disclose any facts or matters on which, in the opinion of the report author, the report or an important part of the report is based and have in his/her opinion been relied on to a material extent in preparing the report but do not include published works. A telephone number of a person to contact if you wish to inspect those papers should be included. In the case of exempt background papers a sentence to the effect that "Background papers are exempt" is sufficient.

Appendices:

Appendix A: Striking the balance: Regional approach

Appendix B: An example completed matrix has been included for information

Education Achievement Service

Striking the Balance

#EncourageApplaudShare #CanmolDathluRhannu

Please note this is an accessible front cover with all formatting removed.

Striking the Balance

**Instead of focusing on what learners have lost,
let's focus on what they need next...**

Our Pledge: We will continue to over communicate with clarity, to strengthen collaboration, support schools and settings to embrace change, promote innovation and support the continuation of learning.

The pandemic has reminded us that even in the most challenging of circumstances positive change has been possible. Schools and settings have seized opportunities to explore innovative ways of working and delivering meaningful teaching and learning experiences through a creative blended learning approach. These experiences should be built upon to avoid a 'snap back,' keeping the positive learning that has been developed during this time and preparing for the future.

Context

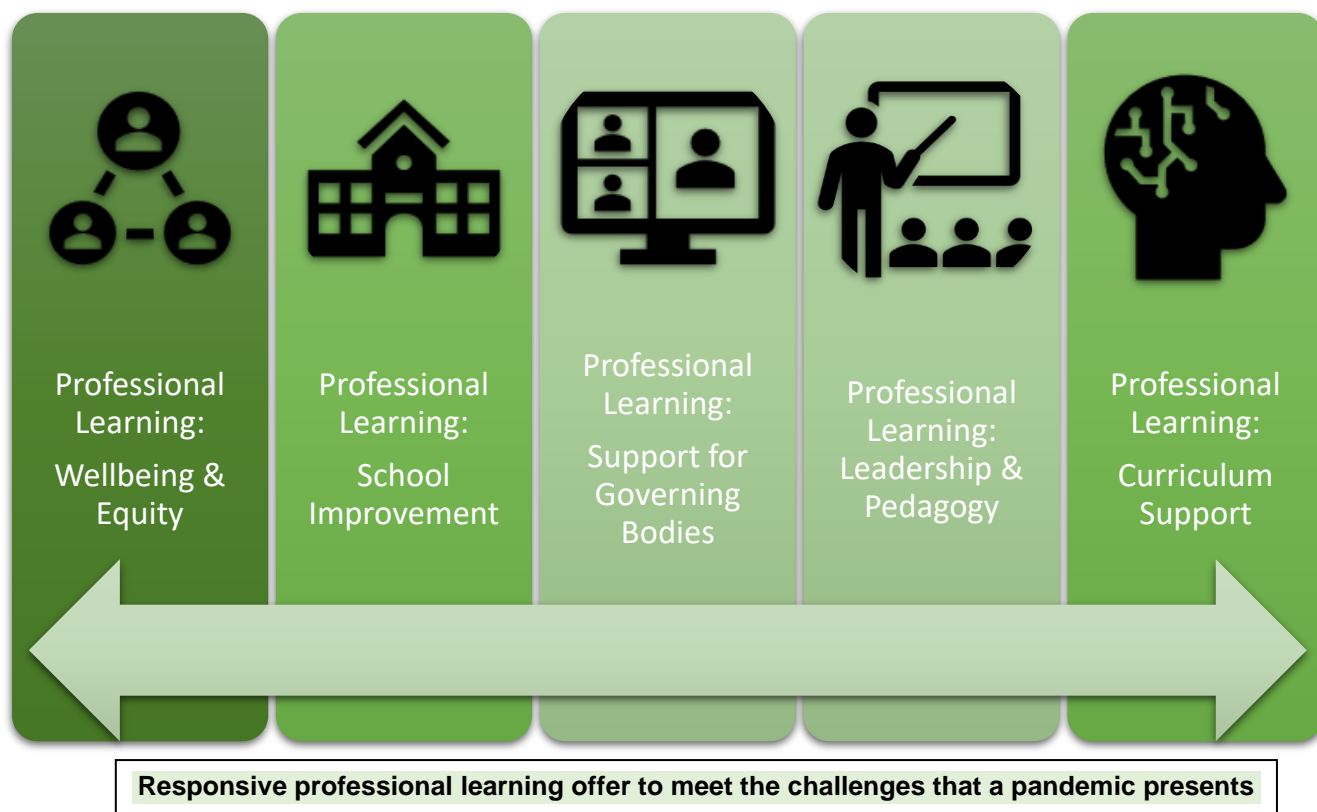
Schools and settings have experienced their own unique set of circumstances during the pandemic. There is no one size fits all model and schools have adopted differing approaches which are best suited to the needs and circumstances of their school communities. During this time, the region has supported schools to reflect upon and refine their approaches to teaching and learning. There was no blueprint for what constituted effective distance and blended learning, nationally or internationally and it has been important to collaborate with schools, learning together.

Schools have been supported with the following:

- Developing agile responses to ensuring continuity of learning and provision.
- Professional learning for all staff, responding to evolving needs and utilising alternative methods of delivery, including provision for Welsh medium settings and the provision of all resources bilingually.
- Well-being webinars and support for leaders, staff, learners and their families/carers. In addition, professional learning and guidance was provided to support disadvantaged and vulnerable groups of learners along with guidance on family and community engagement.
- A programme of virtual Professional Learning for Governors and management committees.
- Guidance for governors and leaders in evaluating and planning for an effective blended learning strategy.
- Preparing for curriculum reform.
- Staying connected through a range of networking opportunities.

All of the above is captured through the Supporting Our Schools website and the Distance and Blended Learning website. Engagement from our schools throughout this period has remained high. During this period, there has been a responsive professional learning offer. This has included the facilitation of sharing opportunities to capture emerging practice and to discuss their developments

and refinements via the Blended Learning task and finish groups and subsequent Masterclass events. These activities have been undertaken alongside the scheduled professional learning programme which was reimagined to respond to the current context.



Whilst the challenges schools and learners have faced have been recognised, nearly all leaders have acknowledged that not all learners have been adversely affected by the pandemic and many learners have had positive learning experiences which have improved over the period of the pandemic. Many leaders and practitioners have reacted positively to this period of change, responding with resilience and agility, including evolving their use of technology innovatively to:

- Improve communication with learners and the wider school community.
- Provide the opportunity for innovative pedagogy, enabling more flexible and tailored learning experiences.
- Enable and enhance collaboration, both internally and with a wider range of partners.
- Broaden opportunities for Professional Learning across the school workforce.

At the start of the pandemic, it could have been difficult to foresee or anticipate the disruption to the lives of learners, staff and school communities that would happen during the course of the year to come. Early on in the pandemic, international organisations such as the OECD were asking us to contemplate the likely longer-term disruption that the pandemic may cause. However, in order to focus on the positives that this period may bring to learners, some of our schools decided to consider the potential benefits that learning at a distance may bring. One example of this was captured by Langstone Primary in this You Tube clip which they promoted through their Twitter feed during the summer term of 2020. [Langstone Primary School - Video Link](#)

This document outlines considerations and guidance to support schools for the remainder of this academic year and beyond.

Striking the balance

How do we strike an appropriate balance between considering the wider learning experiences that have led to positive progress for some, whilst understanding the potential barriers to pupil progress that have developed for others?

It is appropriate to acknowledge that the pandemic has not necessarily been a positive time as many have experienced loss and had difficult lockdown experiences including isolation, physical and mental health challenges, and anxiety. Home learning experiences will have been varied. We know that some learners have struggled and, due to a range of factors including digital exclusion, many have not engaged adequately. It is important to note that some children and families are struggling and that they are concerned that they are not making progress.

In contrast to the above however, some learners have excelled, showing that they can self-regulate, work with independence, and adapt to using technology as well as many more skills that they may not have had opportunity to exercise in the period pre-pandemic.

It is important that schools are enabled to effectively evaluate and assess the progress their learners have made during this period. Schools are in the best position to judge the needs of their learners and identify any support that each learner may require in the coming months.

Teaching and Learning

The quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning at a classroom level is key. Where practice uses effective and nuanced formative assessment strategies, schools and settings adapt teaching practice to meet the needs of individual learners and continue to consult and inform their wider stakeholders. These schools use evaluative information and progress data to inform and refine future practice and provision, shaping their priorities for improvement.

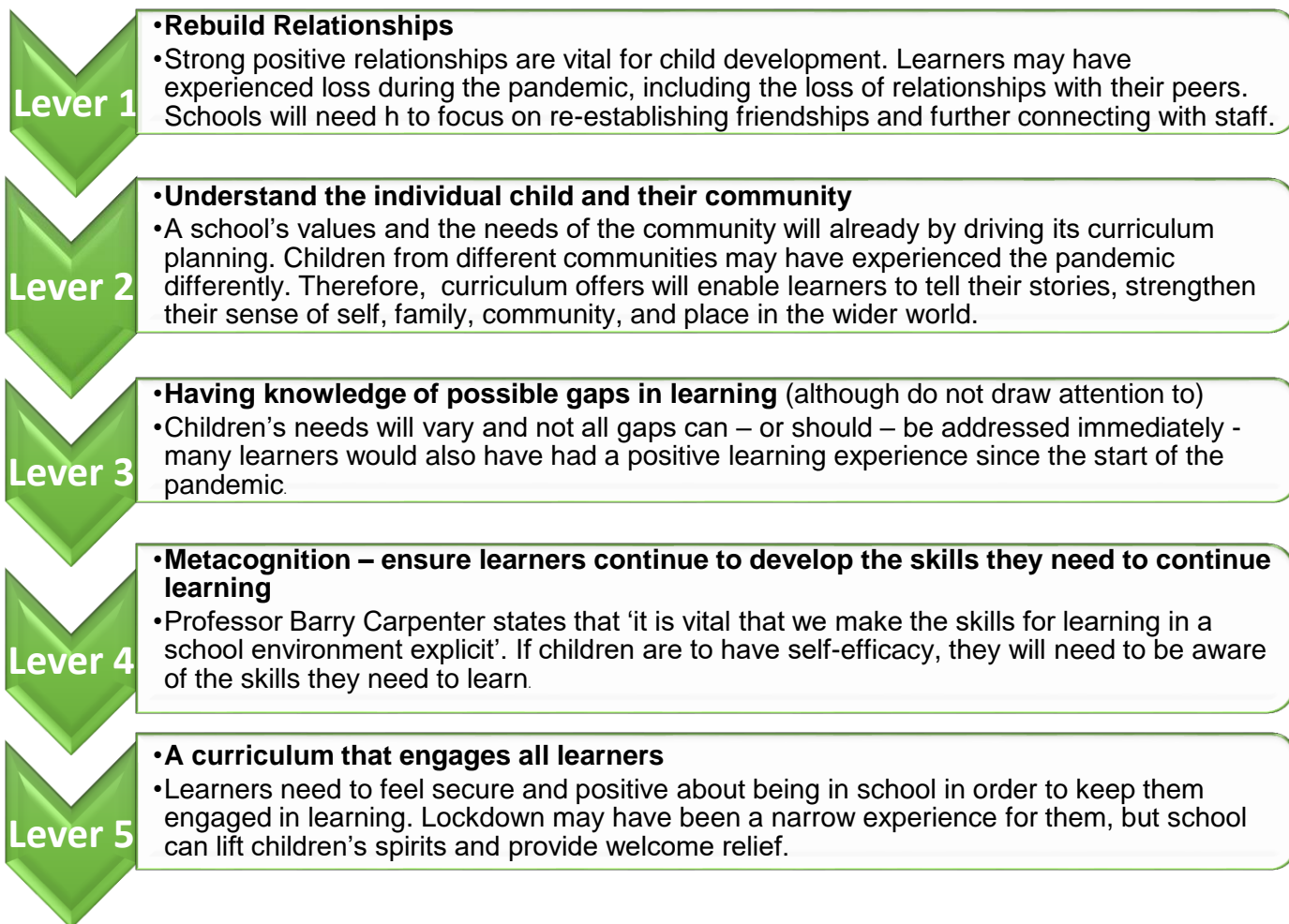
With the date of realisation of the curriculum for Wales drawing nearer, schools have started to reflect upon their experiences of supporting learners through the pandemic in ways in which will support them in developing their curriculum in the longer term. A range of examples are provided below. Schools have reflected upon:

- The centrality of wellbeing of all in the school community
- The purpose of their curriculum offer – Why is the curriculum offer shaped in the way that it is and how can aspects of distance learning provide a broad, balanced learning experience?
- How to broaden their curriculum offer, for example by providing remote learning experiences with third party providers
- How to continue to meet the linguistic needs of all learners, including Welsh-medium learners from English-speaking homes and those who have English as an additional language.
- How technology has helped to facilitate a more bespoke approach to supporting groups of learners or individual learners
- How the use of some learning platforms has facilitated the opportunity to provide a broader range of feedback e.g. verbal feedback using mote.
- How the use of technology to facilitate learning may provide the opportunity for greater flexibility in a learners' timetable in the post-Covid era.
- Trialling aspects of the curriculum for Wales framework to frame learning experiences e.g. the use of the Statements of What Matters and descriptions of learning to support planning.

Evaluating these practices will be crucial in ensuring that the lessons learned during this period become the foundations upon which the future curriculum can be built.

Research Informed Approach

Recently, a think piece entitled [A Recovery Curriculum: Loss and Life for our children and schools post pandemic](#) was published. In it, mental health expert, Professor Barry Carpenter recommends five sensible 'levers' that can help a school recover following a 'systematic, relationships-based approach to reigniting the flame of learning in each child'.



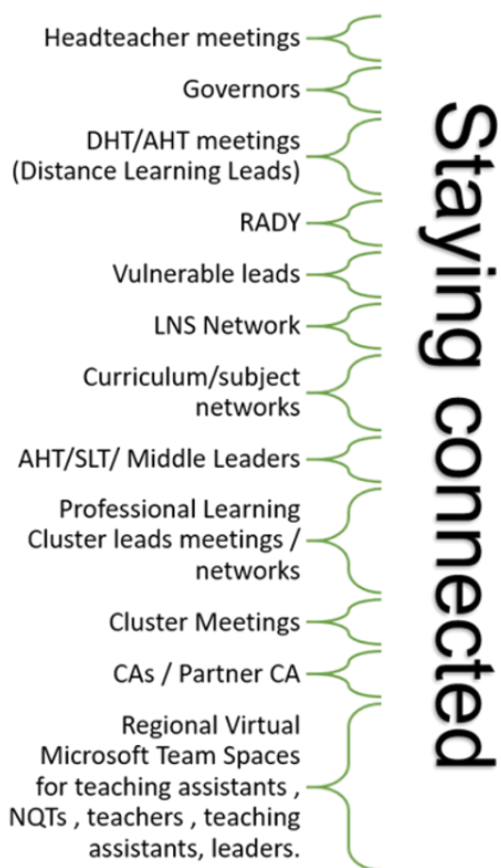
Regional Support

Wellbeing continues to be at the forefront of the regional approach. Schools and their communities will have had their own unique set of circumstances and will require a bespoke and flexible approach to learning together. Every learner will have differing requirements to engage successfully in their continued learning, receiving personalised support enabling them to fully integrate into the whole school experience when the time is right.

What do we need to consider in the next few months?

- Schools' ability to continue to respond flexibly and be agile based on their circumstances.
- Continued distance and blended learning approaches.
- Continued support for schools to use innovative technology to support effective teaching and learning.
- Reintegration back to face-to-face learning for the younger children in the first instance.
- Possible phased return of face-to-face learning for all learners.
- Refining effective formative assessment approaches to establish the needs of all learners.
- Developing and refining innovative transition arrangements.
- Supporting learners to secure qualifications and secure suitable pathways.
- Targeted, needs-led self-evaluation and informed planning for improvement.
- Re-establishing enrichment activities and aspects of the 'informal' curriculum in innovative ways.

How will we support schools during this time?



We will continue to research, refine, respond and reflect on school needs. Our established networks will continue to be the mechanism of communicating with schools and settings. The Supporting our Schools website will continue to be the 'go to place' for all resources and guidance materials.

Please click to access | Cliciwch i gael mynediad:
[Distance and Blended Learning | Dysgu o Bell a Dysgu Cyfunol](#)

Please click to access | Cliciwch i gael mynediad:
[Supporting Our Schools | Cefnogi Ein Hysgolion](#)

Overview of Support

The EAS Business Plan contains the main priorities that will be the focus of our work for 2021-2022. The summary below provides an overview of key support, including Striking the Balance.

Wellbeing

- Professional Learning Keynote speakers with guidance on supporting learners returning to fulltime face to face learning.
- Altogether Again Playlist resource
- The Wellbeing Toolkit Programme
- Developing an ACE Friendly School Programme
- A Whole School Approach to Emotion Coaching Techniques
- Embedding Rights of the Child into the curriculum
- Developing a Teaching and Learning Strategy based on a tiered approach for disadvantaged and vulnerable learners
- Health and Wellbeing AoLE Toolkit with supporting PL programme
- Disadvantaged and Vulnerable Learner Lead Programme (Primary and Secondary)
- Relationships and Sexuality Toolkit Programme
- Grant planning support leading up to the academic year 2021-2022

Intervention Programmes for Support Staff:

- Coping and Connecting
- Reading and Regulating
- Engaging Empathy

School Improvement

- Continue to work with schools to roll out the 'Celebrate, Support, Share and Refine' (CSSR) model, supporting schools to review and refine their models for blended learning, sharing examples of practice from different schools and settings from within and outside the region.
- Support schools and settings to evaluate the impact the pandemic has had on learners, staff and the school community. As a result, provide bespoke support to schools in line with their identified school improvement priorities, including support for NMS.
- Support schools to refine their Transition arrangements.
- SDP and self-evaluation support leading up to the academic year 2021-2022, including arrangements that align to the new Welsh Government School Improvement Guidance
- Team around the school approach for schools with the highest level of need, collaboration, support for school leaders, bespoke support for improvements to the quality of teaching, assessment and learning.

- The continuation of the Teaching and Learning Strategy project with identified schools.
- Facilitate opportunities for collaborative models / networks of schools working together to support one another with their priorities, including the use of established support networks e.g. LNS

Curriculum Support

- Continue to provide access to Programme for Senior Leaders and Headteachers - (Synchronous / Asynchronous options)
- Continue to provide access to Programme for Middle Leaders and Teachers (Synchronous / Asynchronous options) (From Summer term 2021)
- Develop the Secondary curriculum designers' network (to support realisation of the curriculum for Wales)
- Continue to run all existing subject and area-based networks (in partnership with Learning Network Schools)
- Continue to provide Digital professional learning support
- Continue to provide Welsh language support, including Welsh-medium learners from English-speaking homes. Continue to run pre-existing professional learning as advertised in the professional learning calendar
- Continue to support schools to develop and implement their skills strategy

Professional Learning: Leadership & Pedagogy

- Continue to support the refinement and development of distance and blended learning provision including the work of the task and finish group, masterclasses events and the sharing and networking of effective practice from within and beyond the region.
- Continue to facilitate professional learning that supports schools in developing effective practice in pedagogy in the current context, including areas such as assessment for learning, metacognition, effective synchronous and asynchronous learning design.
- Continue to provide national leadership development opportunities reflecting the challenges of the current pandemic for leaders at all levels including: Middle Leaders, Senior Leaders, Aspiring Headteachers, New and Acting Headteachers and Experienced Headteachers. In addition to regional collaborative networking opportunities.
- Develop a regional approach to the identification of aspiring leaders through a Talent Management Approach.
- Continue to provide a virtual professional learning offer for all those who support statutory induction including newly qualified teachers, school-based induction mentors. In addition to regional collaborative networking opportunities.
- Work with strategic partners to begin shaping a national professional learning induction offer to commence September 2021.
- Developing a regional coaching and mentoring approach to support school improvement.
- Facilitate the teaching assistant learning pathway (TALP) professional learning offer which includes support for induction into the TA role, development for practicing teaching assistants and aspiring Higher Level Teaching Assistants.

- Continue working with strategic partners to support Initial Teacher Education pathways.

Governors

- Support for the full range of virtual governing body meetings, including Annual General Meetings.
- Support, according to a school's SLA option for virtual statutory committee meetings where required.
- Continued delivery supported by wider teams of the EAS of Virtual Professional Learning Programme for all governors across the region.
- A Virtual Conference for Governors in March-April with a focus on Governing Body's strategic leadership role in Celebrating, Sharing, Supporting and Refining, ensuring that our school communities learn lessons from the last 12 months and plan to emerge strengthened.
- Increasing the range of communication to our governors beyond the regular email updates, termly newsletters and the Supporting our Schools site, to expand the use of Social media.
- Exploring opportunities for Governors to expand their understanding and use of coaching and mentoring to support school leaders and each other.

Appendix A - Questions schools and settings may wish to consider

- Do we want to use the term lost learning?
- What language and vocabulary should we adopt to avoid the negative messaging associated with 'lost learning' 'recovery' etc.
- How do we quantify this loss in learning? Is this data accurate and is it helpful?
- Do we need to quantify this loss in learning? Is this data accurate and is it helpful?
- What does 'lack of progress' mean within the context of your school or setting?
- Do we know how effective distance and blended learning has been?
- Do we really know what pupils have retained and what they have "forgotten" over the course of lockdown?
- Do we know what effect missing the parts of the curriculum we did will have on pupils' long-term learning and progress?
- Do we know which pupils have thrived and/or made progress in other aspects of their learning during this period?
- Do we know what aspects of this period have strengthened pedagogical practice and therefore we will want to retain moving forward? How will we continue to support the wellbeing of both staff and learners?
- How will we support learners who are reluctant to return to school?
- How will we continue to develop relationships with parents and our wider community that have strengthened during this period?
- How will we use formative assessment to ensure all our learners receive learning experiences that best suit their needs on their return to school?
- How will we build on opportunity and innovation from this period – use of technology, pedagogical approaches, parental / community relationships and engagement?
- How will we ensure that there is a significant and intensified focus on quality of teaching and learning, on effective classroom practice 'intervention in the classroom' and particularly on assessment for learning and formative assessment? How will we evaluate this?
- Will there be specific and nuanced support required for specific year groups or phases, e.g., Foundation Phase, Exam year groups?
- What additional support will Welsh Medium schools require with regards to language development for learners from non-Welsh speaking homes?
- How will we identify and address the skills gaps, e.g. those learners who were digitally excluded or those that have English as an additional language?
- How will we ensure provision for NQTs / induction?

Appendix B - Promoting positivity in language

Vocabulary

Language to encourage	Language to use with caution
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tomorrow will be a good day• Powering Up• Reconnect• Seize opportunities• Bringing solutions• Co-construction• Moving together• 'a catalyst for far more bespoke learning'• Opportunity and innovation• Relevant intervention• Continuity of learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deficit of learning• Everyone needs to Catch-up• Narrowing the COVID gap• Addressing the deficit• Start learning• Learning lost / loss• Lost learning• School closures

Celebrating, Sharing, Supporting and Refining

School: School

Date:

	Wellbeing and Equity	Curriculum and Pedagogy	Leadership and Governance	Professional Learning
<p>Celebrate (What has worked well? / What would you keep?)</p>	<p>The school moved quickly to ensure that families without a digital device (8%) were provided with either a laptop or iPad to support engagement with distance learning. 28 children accessed the hub provision, at an average of 12-15 each day.</p> <p>Those who were struggling to engage in distance learning were encouraged to access the hub to continue with their learning. Attitudes to learning and school became a key area of focus for this group. Nurture principles were well-embedded in to distance learning. Key staff had a 1:1 link with vulnerable learners.</p>	<p>The retention of the 7-class structure at School helped to keep class sizes smaller. This has in part been funded by the Headteachers part-time secondment to support another local school. This has been complemented by the use of the ALP grant to allow support staff to focus on nurture provision.</p> <p>Through the recent lockdown period, as a result of learner and parent feedback, the school has provided three live sessions each day, which has supported and improved learner engagement. Curriculum provision has been focused around adopting</p>	<p>Prior to the first lockdown in March 2020, the school reviewed vision and values, with a view towards realising the new curriculum for Wales. Its core values of belonging, resilience and pride were determined. All three have been significantly illustrated during the last 12 months, with resilience in particular being a significant focus for the school community.</p> <p>Home-schools communications were managed using the see-saw app. Feedback from parents and data from parental surveys show that this has been</p>	<p>The school's curriculum work has been supported by professional learning on how to utilise the new progression steps /descriptions of learning in the curriculum for Wales framework to support planning.</p> <p>The school has also promoted an emphasis in professional learning on supporting formative assessment and metacognition.</p> <p>A wide menu of professional learning has been on offer to all staff throughout the period of the pandemic, with staff engaged in a variety of programmes, e.g. national leadership programmes, NQT support etc. Staff are</p>

	<p>Virtual 1:1 sessions were held with parents, children and their teachers. These sessions evolved from simple phone calls to nurture and Thrive sessions with the child and their family. This work supported pupil engagement with the wider curriculum and supported learner access and motivation. Engagement in live learning has also been helped by listening to pupil voice – inclusion of pupil choice songs to join a call and ‘Just dance’ sessions to leave sessions have supported emotional wellbeing and increased engagement. The leadership team has regularly monitored staff wellbeing and sought regular feedback from staff. A number of methods have been employed to support this e.g.</p>	<p>curriculum for Wales principles. Google classroom was established as the platform to support access to distance learning. In the initial lockdown period, pupils were provided with three pieces of work per day to complete virtually. Following learner voice and action research, three live sessions per day have been provided since January 2021. Engagement in live sessions has averaged at 75%, however, this does not account for learners who have been provided with paper packs to support their learning.</p>	<p>highly valued by parents.</p> <p>Transitions have been managed virtually e.g. through virtual tours to introduce pupils in the infant school to their new junior classrooms. Pupils leaving in Year 6 during the summer term of 2020 were provided with the opportunity to engage in a virtual leavers concert and presentation ceremony. The school’s approach to Monitoring, Evaluation and Review has continued during the pandemic. AoLE leads have also had access to all Google classrooms to monitor the quality of provision of distance and blended learning. Governors have been encouraged to join some of the live sessions provided to gain an understanding of the schools</p>	<p>also granted a good deal of autonomy to determine what excites and motivates them with regard to their own PL. There is a safe and trusting culture in the school allowing staff to have the freedom to try new things and take risks without fear of failure or criticism. This openness, honesty and transparency allows for a well embedded culture of enquiry.</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly quizzes/socials • Staff having the opportunity to take PPA at home • Limited screen time days <p>Leaders reviewed how much time staff were spending responding to parental requests and enquiries to ensure the manageability of these approaches. The school has continued to work towards national accreditation e.g. Rights Respecting School, working towards Nurture Quality Mark</p>		<p>approaches to distance learning.</p> <p>The Teacher Governor set up a Google Classroom provision for Governors to support the teaching and learning sub-committee. This has helped the governing body to support the school in the shaping of its distance and blended learning policy.</p>	
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<p>Share (What is worth sharing?) (What have you shared? / who with?)</p>	<p>The school's wellbeing lead has worked with pupils (wellbeing warriors) to develop the school's approaches to supporting wellbeing. A wide-range of examples were provided of how learner wellbeing has been considered throughout the pandemic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online friendship group sessions • Birthday party afternoons • Assemblies to provide a focus for community celebrations. • Feel-good Friday sessions • Wellbeing Wednesdays <p>The school has also attempted to keep wellbeing approaches consistent between face to face teaching and learning remotely e.g. Circle time. A hot-chocolate care package is awarded to</p>	<p>A thematic approach to curriculum development has been taken, with a number of theme weeks providing a rich stimulus for learning from different Areas of Learning. Examples provided were 'life on our planet', a Connecting Classrooms (British Council link project) focusing on a partnership with schools in Lesotho and the virtual Eisteddfod. To support differentiation teachers have provided learners with a choice of tasks to complete and used the chili challenge method to provide tasks of varying difficulty. Curriculum provision has also sought to promote learners physical health.</p>	<p>A strong focus of this work has been to engage with 'learner-voice' activity, to ensure that provision is planned to meet learners needs. This work involved scenario planning in the autumn term and allowed action-based research in one class to 'practice' approaches to distance and blended learning whilst pupils were on the school site. This allowed staff to make adjustments to processes prior to cases of isolation or full lockdown episodes.</p>	<p>The focus of professional learning to support distance learning has been the use of action research. Staff 'live-tested' distance learning within school, to get the learners' perspective and develop protocols ahead of lockdown periods. During November, one INSET day was dedicated to providing staff with the opportunity to practice distance learning from home.</p>
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	<p>one learner each week. This is delivered by a staff member to a learners home and has provided the school with the opportunity to check-in with learners and their parents.</p>			
<p>Support (What support do you require?)</p>	<p>School has accessed support through their Principal Challenge Adviser, Challenge Advsier and via attendance at the Distance ad Blended Learning Masterclasses</p>			
<p>Refine (What needs tweaking / adjusting to further develop provision?)</p>	<p>Refinement and self evaluation has been an ongoing process throughout the course of the pandemic.</p>			

<p>Renewal (What have we learned to inform our Post-Covid era? – Areas for rethinking and renewal)</p>		<p>Learning during the pandemic has allowed a focus on a number of areas. Current considerations are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retaining theme weeks / wellbeing approaches • Provide less written feedback to learners, focusing on other approaches to formative assessment. • Set up of a Community Google Classroom to help build on the skills families have learned together over this period. 	<p>Following engagement with the EAS Simon Breakspear webinar, the school is looking to frame its post-pandemic evaluation around the three questions for renewal presented during the session.</p>	
<p>Additional Information including Attendees</p>				