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For all enquiries relating to this agenda please contact Julie Lloyd
(Tel: 01443 864246 Email: lloydj4@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Date: 29th May 2024

To Whom It May Concern,

A multi-locational meeting of the **Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee** will be held in Penallta House, and via Microsoft Teams on **Tuesday, 4th June, 2024 at 5.30 pm** to consider the matters contained in the following agenda. Councillors and the public wishing to speak on any item can do so by making a request to the Chair. You are also welcome to use Welsh at the meeting, both these requests require a minimum notice period of 3 working days. A simultaneous translation will be provided on request.

Members of the public or Press may attend in person at Penallta House or may view the meeting live via the following link: <https://civico.net/caerphilly>

This meeting will be live-streamed and a recording made available to view via the Council's website, except for discussions involving confidential or exempt items. Therefore the images/audio of those individuals speaking will be publicly available to all via the Council website at www.caerphilly.gov.uk

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chrissy', enclosed in a large, loopy oval shape.

Christina Harrhy
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

A G E N D A

Pages

- 1 To receive apologies for absence.

A greener place Man gwyrddach



2 Declarations of Interest.

Councillors and Officers are reminded of their personal responsibility to declare any personal and/or prejudicial interest(s) in respect of any item of business on this agenda in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000, the Council's Constitution and the Code of Conduct for both Councillors and Officers.

3 Consideration of any matter referred to this Committee in accordance with the call-in procedure.

4 Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme.

1 - 14

To receive and consider the following Scrutiny reports:-

5 Post 16, Single Sex and Surplus Places Board - Proposal to close Lewis Girls School and make a Regulated Alteration to Lewis School Pengam.

15 - 18

6 Progress in working with Schools to embed approaches to meet the needs of Children and Young People that impact on reducing exclusions.

19 - 36

7 Pupil Attendance.

37 - 46

Circulation:

Councillors Mrs E.M. Aldworth, C. Bishop, A. Broughton-Pettit, M. Chacon-Dawson, D. Cushing, Mrs P. Cook, M. Evans, A. Farina-Childs, C.J. Gordon, T. Heron, A. Leonard, B. Miles (Vice Chair), T. Parry (Chair), J.E. Roberts, J. Simmonds, S. Skivens, J. Winslade and K. Woodland

Co-opted Members:

Cardiff ROC Archdiocesan Commission for Education Representative (with voting rights on educational matters)

Mr M. Western

Parent Governor Representatives (with voting rights on educational matters)

T. Millington (Parent Governor Representative)

Outside Body Representatives (without voting rights)

Mrs P. Ireland (NEU) and Mrs K. Cole (NEU)

Caerphilly Governors Association (without voting rights)

Mr D Davies

Users and Carers - Vacant

And Appropriate Officers

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of speakers will be publicly available to all via the Council website at www.caerphilly.gov.uk. except for discussions involving confidential or exempt items.

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EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 4TH JUNE 2024

**SUBJECT: EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

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

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To report the Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Forward Work Programmes are essential to ensure that Scrutiny Committee agendas reflect the strategic issues facing the Council and other priorities raised by Members, the public or stakeholder.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That Members consider any changes and agree the final forward work programme prior to publication.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To improve the operation of scrutiny.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 The Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee forward work programme includes all reports that were identified at the Committee Meeting on Monday 20th May 2024. The work programme outlines the reports planned for the period June 2024 until March 2025.
- 5.2 The forward Work Programme is made up of reports identified by officers and members. Members are asked to consider the work programme alongside the

cabinet work programme and suggest any changes before it is published on the council website. The Scrutiny committee will review this work programme at every meeting going forward alongside any changes to the cabinet work programme or report requests.

5.3 The Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme is attached at Appendix 1, which presents the current status as at 14th May 2024. The Cabinet Work Programme is attached at Appendix 2. A copy of the prioritisation flowchart is attached at appendix 3 to assist the scrutiny committee to determine what items should be added to the forward work programme.

5.4 **Conclusion**

The work programme is for consideration and amendment by the scrutiny committee prior to publication on the council website.

6. **ASSUMPTIONS**

6.1 No assumptions are necessary.

7. **SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

7.1 As this report is for information only an Integrated Impact Assessment is not necessary.

8. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 There are no specific financial implications arising as a result of this report.

9. **PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are no specific personnel implications arising as a result of this report.

10. **CONSULTATIONS**

10.1 There are no consultation responses that have not been included in this report.

11. **STATUTORY POWER**

11.1 The Local Government Act 2000.

Author: Mark Jacques, Scrutiny Officer jacqu@carphilly.gov.uk

Consultees: Dave Street, Deputy Chief Executive
Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director for Education and Corporate

Services

Keri Cole, Chief Education Officer

Gareth Jenkins, Interim Corporate Director – Social Services

Robert Tranter, Head of Legal Services/ Monitoring Officer

Lisa Lane, Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer,
Legal Services

Councillor Teresa Parry, Chair of Education and Social Services Scrutiny
Committee

Councillor Brenda Miles, Vice Chair of Education and Social Services
Scrutiny Committee

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee Forward Work
Programme

Appendix 2 Cabinet Forward Work Programme

Appendix 3 Forward Work Programme Prioritisation Flowchart

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Forward Work Programme - Education and Social Services

Appendix 1

Date	Title	Key Issues	Author	Cabinet Member
04/06/24 17:30	Exclusions	Approaches taken by schools Impact of school interventions Current rates of exclusions Support and challenge to schools	Ellis, Sarah;	Cllr. Andrews, Carol;
04/06/24 17:30	Pupil Attendance		Warren, Paul;	Cllr. Andrews, Carol;
04/06/24 17:30	The proposal to move to coeducation for Lewis Girls and Lewis School Pengam	For Scrutiny Members to provide their 'views', via vote, on the proposal for Lewis Girls and Lewis School Pengam in line with the requirements of the 'School Organisation Code 2018'.	Edmunds, Richard 'Ed';	Cllr. Andrews, Carol;
04/06/24 17:30	Information Item - Regional Partnership Board 6-month update	Implementation of governance review Update on work of RPB	Williams, Jo;	Cllr. Andrews, Carol;
16/07/24 17:30	Social Services - Annual Corporate Safeguarding Report	To ensure Scrutiny Committee is fully aware of the Council's arrangements for corporate safeguarding and is satisfied and assured that these arrangements are effective.	Jenkins, Gareth;	Cllr. Forehead, Elaine;
16/07/24 17:30	Amalgamation of Hendre Infants and Junior Schools	For Scrutiny Members to endorse a recommendation to consult on the proposal following the Statutory process as prescribed by the 'School Organisation Code 2018'.	West, Andrea;	Cllr. Andrews, Carol;
16/07/24 17:30	Proposal for the closure of Rhydri Primary School	For Scrutiny Members to endorse a recommendation to consult on the proposal following the Statutory process as prescribed by the 'School Organisation Code 2018'.	West, Andrea;	Cllr. Andrews, Carol;
16/07/24 17:30	Information Item - Complaints		Williams, Jo;	Cllr. Forehead, Elaine;
23/07/24 17:30	2024-25 Social Services Revenue Budget	To provide Members with details of the 2024/25 revenue budget settlement for Social Services.	Jones, Mike;	Cllr. Forehead, Elaine;
23/07/24 17:30	Social Services Grants 2024-25	To inform Members of grant funding available for social care in the 2024/25 financial year.	Jones, Mike;	Cllr. Forehead, Elaine;
23/07/24 17:30	Education Revenue Budget		Southcombe, Jane;	Cllr. Andrews, Carol;
23/07/24 17:30	Education Grants 2024-25		Southcombe, Jane;	Cllr. Andrews, Carol;

03/09/24 17:30	The proposal to move to coeducation for Lewis Girls and Lewis School Pengam	To obtain the views of Scrutiny on the consultation update report prior to Cabinet making their decision to proceed to Statutory Notice.	Edmunds, Richard 'Ed';	Cllr. Andrews, Carol;
03/09/24 17:30	Federation of Cwmaber Infants and Junior Schools	For Scrutiny Members to provide their 'views', via vote, on the proposal to federate Cwmaber Infants and Junior Schools	West, Andrea;	Cllr. Andrews, Carol;
03/09/24 17:30	Amalgamation of Hendre Infants and Junior Schools	For Scrutiny Members to provide their 'views', via vote, on the proposal to amalgamate Hendre Infants and Junior Schools	West, Andrea;	Cllr. Andrews, Carol;
03/09/24 17:30	Additional Support Delegation		Cole, Keri;	Cllr. Andrews, Carol;
15/10/24 17:30	Proposal for the closure of Rhydri Primary School	For Scrutiny Members to provide their 'views', via vote, on the proposal to close Rhydri Primary School	West, Andrea;	Cllr. Andrews, Carol;
15/10/24 17:30	LGES Inspection Report		Cole, Keri;	Cllr. Andrews, Carol;
15/10/24 17:30	Annual Report for the Director of Social Services		Jenkins, Gareth;	Cllr. Forehead, Elaine;
26/11/24 17:30	Federation of Cwmaber Infants and Junior Schools	To obtain the views of Scrutiny on the consultation report prior to Cabinet making their decision to implement the Federation	West, Andrea;	Cllr. Andrews, Carol;
26/11/24 17:30	Amalgamation of Hendre Infants and Junior Schools	To obtain the views of Scrutiny on the consultation update report prior to Cabinet making their decision to proceed to Statutory Notice	West, Andrea;	Cllr. Andrews, Carol;
26/11/24 17:30	The proposal to move to coeducation for Lewis Girls and Lewis School Pengam	For Scrutiny Members to consider the Objection Report and endorse the recommendation to Cabinet, via vote, to implement the proposal	Edmunds, Richard 'Ed';	Cllr. Andrews, Carol;
26/11/24 17:30	Proposal for the closure of Rhydri Primary School	To obtain the views of Scrutiny on the consultation update report prior to Cabinet making their decision to proceed to Statutory Notice	West, Andrea;	Cllr. Andrews, Carol;
28/01/25 17:30				

11/03/25 17:30	Amalgamation of Hendre Infants and Junior Schools	For Scrutiny Members to consider the Objection Report and endorse the recommendation to Cabinet, via vote, to implement the proposal	West, Andrea	Cllr. Andrews, Carol;
11/03/25 17:30	Proposal for the closure of Rhydri Primary School	For Scrutiny Members to consider the Objection Report and endorse the recommendation to Cabinet, via vote, to implement the proposal	West, Andrea	Cllr. Andrews, Carol;

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Cabinet Forward Work Programme – 29th May 2024

Meeting date:	Report title:	Key issue:	Report author	Cabinet Member:
05/06/24 13:00 p.m.	Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 2023/24	To inform Cabinet and seek their endorsement of the progress made during the financial year 2023-2024 against four specific areas of Welsh language work, as required under the regulatory framework for implementing the Welsh Language Standards	Anwen Cullinane /Kath Peters	Cllr Eluned Stenner
05/06/24	The federation of the Cwmaber Infants School and Cwmaber Junior School	To seek Cabinet approval to move to formal consultation, in partnership with each Governing Body, for the federation of Cwmaber Infants School and Cwmaber Junior School	Sue Richards/Andrea West	Cllr Carol Andrews
05/06/24	School Inspection Update - Estyn	To update members on recent Estyn school inspections and to offer an analysis of themes for comment and observations.	Keri Cole	Cllr Carol Andrews
05/06/24	Residential Parking Permit Inquiry – Final Report	To advise on the final recommendations of the Scrutiny Task and Finish inquiry into the potential implications of changes to the current Residents' Parking Policy	Mark Jacques	Cllr Nigel George
05/06/24	Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Allocation	To seek approval from Cabinet for the allocation of up to £145,000 from the accumulated CIL fund.	Richard (Ed) Edmunds	Cllr Philippa Leonard

Cabinet Forward Work Programme – 29th May 2024

Meeting date:	Report title:	Key issue:	Report author	Cabinet Member:
26/06/24 13:00 p.m.	Local Housing Market Assessment and the Welsh Government Prospectus	To discuss and approve the LHMA and the Prospectus. Welsh Government requires all Local Authorities to undertake a Local Housing Market Assessment and a Prospectus. The documents set out the requirement for housing within the county borough and is utilised to inform the LDP, the allocation of Social Housing Grant and the Council's own Caerphilly Homes development programme.	Nick Taylor-Williams/Jane Roberts-Waite/ Mark Jennings	Cllr Shayne Cook
24/07/24 13:00 p.m.	Proposed Waste Strategy and Consultation Feedback.	Consideration of public consultation feedback in regard Draft Waste Strategy and finalisation of new Waste Strategy to allow development of Full Business case for submission to Welsh Government.	Marcus Lloyd/Hayley Jones/ Hayley Lancaster	Cllr Chris Morgan
24/07/24	Leasing Scheme Wales	To seek Cabinet agreement to adopt the Welsh Government leasing scheme Wales to increase access to the private rented sector	Nick Taylor -Williams	Cllr Shayne Cook
24/07/24	Social Services - Annual Corporate Safeguarding Report	To present the 2023-24 Annual Corporate Safeguarding Report, Forward Work Programme and Safeguarding Key Activity Data for information to ensure Cabinet is fully aware of the Council's arrangements for corporate safeguarding and is satisfied that these arrangements are effective.	Gareth Jenkins	Cllr Elaine Forehead

Cabinet Forward Work Programme – 29th May 2024

Meeting date:	Report title:	Key issue:	Report author	Cabinet Member:
24/07/24	Public Protection Annual Report	To update Cabinet on the enforcement activities of the public protection division for 2023/24	Rob Hartshorn	Cllr Philippa Leonard
24/07/24	Amalgamation of Hendre Infants and Junior Schools	To seek approval to proceed to Consultation	Sue Richards, Andrea West	Cllr Carol Andrews
24/07/24	Proposal for the closure of Rhydri Primary School	For Scrutiny Members to consider the Objection Report and endorse the recommendation to Cabinet, via vote, to implement the proposal	Sue Richards, Andrea West	Cllr Carol Andrews
24/07/24	Exempt Item - Tourism Review: Memorandum of Understanding in respect of Cwmcarn Forest with Natural Resources Wales	This item is subject to a public interest test	Allan Dallimore	Cllr James Pritchard
18/09/24 13:00 p.m.	Annual Directorate Performance Assessments and Corporate Performance Assessments (DPA's/CPA's)	To update Cabinet on the year end DPA's and CPA's	Ros Roberts/Kath Peters/Sue Richards	Cllr Eluned Stenner
18/09/24	Post 16, Single Sex and Surplus Places Board Next Steps - Stage 1 (The proposal to move to coeducation for Lewis Girls and Lewis School Pengam)	To seek Cabinet approval to publish the Statutory Notice	Sue Richards/Andrea West	Cllr Carol Andrews

Cabinet Forward Work Programme – 29th May 2024

Meeting date:	Report title:	Key issue:	Report author	Cabinet Member:
18/09/24	Gwent Serious Violence Strategy	To seek Members views and Cabinet approval from members for the Gwent Serious Violence Strategy	Natalie Kenny/Rob Hartshorn	Cllr Philippa Leonard

Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme Prioritisation



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EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 4TH JUNE 2024

**SUBJECT: POST 16, SINGLE SEX AND SURPLUS PLACES BOARD –
PROPOSAL TO CLOSE LEWIS GIRLS SCHOOL AND MAKE
A REGULATED ALTERATION TO LEWIS SCHOOL PENGAM**

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

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to officially consult with Members in respect of the Post 16, Single Sex and Surplus Places Board recommendation to close Lewis Girls School and make a regulated alteration to Lewis School Pengam to change from single sex to co-education with effect from September 2025.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The purpose of the report is to consult with members on the proposal outlined below:
- To close Lewis Girls school and make a regulated alteration to Lewis School Pengam to change from single sex to co-education with effect from September 2025.
- 2.2 The Lewis Girls School site would be retained as a provision to Lewis School Pengam to manage the transition over a number of years. (minimising impact on exam pupils and enabling staff and pupils to be integrated over an appropriate timeframe).
- 2.3 The consultation period for the proposal commenced on the 3rd June 2024 and ends midnight on the 15th July 2024.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Members are asked to:
- a) Note the information contained in the report and the attached consultation pack.

- b) To obtain Members views as part of the consultation process for the proposal which will be noted as part of the minutes of this meeting and included in the Consultation Report which will be presented to Cabinet as part of the decision making process.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To ensure Members are consulted with regards to the outlined proposal and assist the Council in discharging its duty in consulting stakeholders in line with the requirements of the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code 2018 where applicable.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 The Post 16, Single Sex Surplus Places Board was set up in 2019 to develop recommendations for change that would be considered by Caerphilly's Cabinet.
- 5.2 The Board is made up of a wide range of stakeholders including Head Teachers, College Representatives, Scrutiny Members, Governor Representatives, TU Representatives, EAS representatives and Local Education Authority Officers.
- 5.3 The Board's initial work focused on the development of a set of proposals for a sustainable approach to 6th form provision across the whole of the County Borough.
- 5.4 The Upper Rhymney Valley (URV) Sixth Form Partnership and the Caerphilly Sixth Form Partnership were subsequently formed with schools working together to ensure as broad a curriculum could be offered to learners as sustainably as possible.
- 5.5 The Board has recently been reconvened to conclude its work by developing recommendations to Cabinet in respect of single sex provision across the Lewis Schools and reducing the level of surplus places, specifically across Secondary Schools within the Upper Rhymney Valley.
- 5.6 The Board met on the 31st January 2024 and the 6th February 2024. Members considered a presentation that built on the previously established informal consensus on Single Sex provision and addressing surplus places, as well as providing additional information that the Local Authority had been tasked with establishing to aid decision-making.
- 5.7 At its meeting of the 6th February 2024, the Board voted unanimously in support of the recommendation that Council should formally consult stakeholders with a view to:
- (1) moving from Single Sex provision to co-education in the Upper Rhymney Valley
(2) locating Lewis catchment pupils at the Lewis School Pengam site, while retaining the Lewis Girls School site to manage the transition over a number of years (minimising impact on exam pupils and enabling staff and pupils to be integrated over an appropriate timeframe)
- 5.8 The "Post 16, Single Sex and Surplus Places Board – Further Recommendations to Cabinet" report was considered by a special meeting of the Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee on Wednesday 20th March 2024 and Cabinet on Wednesday 3rd April 2024, where approval was received to progress to consultation.

- 5.9 As part of the requirements of the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code 2018 and Section 42/44 of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013, proposals must be published when we make a 'regulated alteration' to a maintained school and consultation must be undertaken with Members and wider Stakeholders as outlined in the attached documentation.
- 5.10 The consultation period for the proposal commenced on the 3rd June 2024 and will close midnight on the 15th July 2024
- 5.11 Following consultation, all the comments received during the consultation period will be compiled into a Consultation Report as prescribed by Welsh Government in respect of the proposal.
- 5.12 The Consultation Report will be taken to Cabinet who will then decide as to whether to proceed, make changes or not to proceed with the proposal.
- 5.13 Should Cabinet decide to proceed, a Statutory Notice will be published providing a 28 day notice period for objections. The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 provides that anyone wishing to make objections to a school organisation proposal has the opportunity to do so at this stage. To be considered as statutory objections, objections must be made in writing and sent to the Council within the notice period. Formal Responses can only be registered following the publication of a statutory notice.
- 5.14 Full details of the Consultation Process for the proposal can be found in the main Consultation Document as part of the attached consultation pack.

5.15 **Conclusion**

- 5.15.1 Members are asked to note the information contained in this report and the supporting consultation pack documentation with a view to providing views on the proposal in their capacity as a 'consultee' under the School Organisation Code 2018.
- 5.15.2 Members views will be included in the Consultation Report which will be taken to Cabinet who will then decide on how the proposal will progress as outlined in 5.12 and 5.13.

6. **ASSUMPTIONS**

- 6.1 No assumptions have been made in relation to this report. The process outlined by Welsh Government is being adhered to ensure transparency, balanced and open decision making.

7. **SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 A full Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) has been completed in relation to the proposal to ensure compliance with the socio-economic duty, Sections 1 to 3 of Equality Act 2010.

[Link to IIA](#)

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 None at this stage and it will not be until the consultation has concluded that a decision on next steps, and therefore costs, can be made.
- 8.2 There will be further reports to Scrutiny and Cabinet as next steps are determined and any further proposals are developed.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 This will be dependent on specific proposals that will be taken forward albeit the Trade Unions have been briefed and will continue to be briefed as the consultations progress.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 The draft report was distributed as detailed below. All comments received have been reflected in this version of the report.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 School Organisation Code 2018 (Welsh Government)
School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013

Author: Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director of Education and Corporate Services

Consultees: Dave Street, Deputy Chief Executive
Mark S Williams, Corporate Director for Economy and Environment
Gareth Jenkins, Interim Corporate Director for Social Services
Councillor Carol Andrews, Cabinet Member for Education and Communities
Councillor Teresa Parry, Chair of Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee
Sue Richards, Head of Education Planning and Strategy and Place Shaping Programme Director
Andrea West, Place Shaping and Sustainable Communities for Learning Service Manager
Stephen Harris, Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer
Keri Cole, Chief Education Officer
Sarah Ellis, Lead for Inclusion and ALN
Sarah Mutch, Early Years Manager
Paul Warren, Strategic Lead for School Improvement
Jane Southcombe, Financial Services Manager
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services
Rob Tranter, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
Ben Winstanley, Head of Land and Property Services
Steve Pugh, Corporate Communications Manager

Appendices:

Link to Consultation Pack – [Lewis Girls School and Lewis School Pengam](#)



EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 4TH JUNE 2024

**SUBJECT: PROGRESS IN WORKING WITH SCHOOLS TO EMBED
 APPROACHES TO MEET THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND
 YOUNG PEOPLE THAT IMPACT ON REDUCING
 EXCLUSIONS**

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

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report aims to provide an update for members of the progress of the Local Authority education department support teams in working with schools to embed approaches to meet the needs of children and young people that impact on reducing exclusions.

1.2 This report also aims to provide an update on current exclusion rates.

2. SUMMARY

2.1 This report aims to outline the LA approach to targeting pupil exclusions (and attendance) through: (i) effective self-evaluation and analysis of data; (ii) the EPS professional learning offer to schools – that aims to support and upskill staff to understand the factors that might underpin pupil wellbeing and behaviour and support pupil wellbeing; and the 3-year Wales Restorative Approaches Partnership (WRAP) pilot project; and (iii) support for learners through the delivery of interventions which aim to exert a positive impact on pupil (and staff) wellbeing and behaviour.

2.2 This approach aligns with the LA's Inclusion Compendium (IC). The IC highlights the importance of screening measures to identify vulnerable pupils (e.g., PASS survey and the Vulnerability Index – developed by the EPS) and positive and respectful relationships within the school community. It outlines the core practices that support wellbeing, promote positive relationships, and build resilience at a universal, targeted and specialist level.

2.3 The report summarises the number of exclusions across the LA for the period 2020-2021 to 2023-2024 which shows that there has been a significant increase in both permanent and fixed term exclusions since pupils returned to school following the Covid-19 Pandemic; this culminated in a peak during the last academic year (2022-

2023). The use of permanent exclusions by secondary schools remains a concern for the LA. However, current data suggests a levelling out of fixed term exclusions of 5 days or less in secondary and primary schools and a reduction in the number of pupils receiving exclusions, the number of days lost to exclusion and the number of exclusions issued of 5 days or more. Similarly, there has been a reduction this academic year in the number of exclusions of learners who are looked after, those eligible for free school meals and ALN learners, both in terms of exclusions up to and over 5 days, compared to the same time period last academic year (first two terms).

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Members are asked to note the contents of the report and
- i) consider the information contained in the report and to offer views and comments;
 - ii) endorse the approach taken by the LA to embed approaches to meet the needs of children and young people that impact on reducing exclusions

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Members are asked to endorse the approach the Local Authority (LA) has adopted in its provision of universal, targeted, and specific support to enable schools to better understand and support pupil wellbeing, thereby making exclusions less likely to occur.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 Since the return to school following the Covid 19 pandemic, schools have reported a deterioration in pupil behaviour with increased levels of general and persistent disruptive behaviour, reduced engagement, increased anxiety, and reduced resilience, which schools are finding hard to regulate. This has resulted in an increase in pupil exclusions and requests to support pupil wellbeing needs, in addition to a decrease in school attendance figures.

- 5.2 Overall, pupil exclusions across the LA are too high and challenges remain around the number of permanent exclusions particularly in secondary schools (see Table 1 in Appendix 1). The tables in Appendix 1 summarise the number of exclusions across the LA for the period 2020-2021 to 2023-2024. Inspection of these tables highlight a year-on-year increase in both permanent and fixed term exclusions since pupils returned to school following the Covid-19 Pandemic; this culminated in a peak during the last academic year (2022-2023). Whilst the use of permanent exclusions by secondary schools remains a concern for the LA, current data suggests a levelling out of fixed term exclusions of 5 days or less in secondary and primary schools, which will be the first year in four years where there has not been an increase. We are also anticipating, based on current data, a reduction in the use of longer fixed term exclusions (over 5 days; see Table 2, Appendix 1) in both primary and secondary schools. Comparison of the first two terms of 2023-2024 with the same period last year (see Table 3, Appendix 1), highlights that whilst there has been a slight increase in the number of exclusions below 5 days for both primary and secondary schools, there has been a reduction in the number of pupils receiving exclusions, the number of days lost to exclusion and the number of exclusions issued of 5 days or more. Similarly, there has also been a reduction this year in the number of exclusions of learners who are looked after, those eligible for free school meals and ALN learners, both in terms of exclusions both up to and over 5 days, compared to the first two terms of last year.

- 5.3 The LA approach to targeting pupil exclusions (and attendance) is through : (i) effective self-evaluation and analysis of data; (ii) the Educational Psychology Service's (EPS) professional learning offer to schools – that aims to support and upskill staff to understand the factors that might underpin pupil wellbeing and behaviour and support pupil wellbeing, and the 3-year Wales Restorative Approaches Partnership (WRAP) pilot; and (iii) support for learners through the EPS wellbeing interventions offer linked to the Inclusion Compendium, the EPS phased model of service delivery and school surgeries and helpline undertaken by the Behaviour Officers who are part of the Advisory Team Service.
- 5.4 Effective self-evaluation activities include: school behaviour and wellbeing reviews leading to Team Around the School processes and analysis of exclusion data.
- 5.5 Exclusion data is analysed in a variety of ways: by length and number of fixed term exclusions (fte); number of days lost; and number of pupils receiving a fte or permanent exclusion (pex) – overall and for those from vulnerable groups (pupils in receipt of free school meals, pupils with additional learning needs, and pupils who are looked after).
- 5.6 Monthly meetings have been set up with key managers within the Education Directorate (Inclusion Team and Education Welfare Service - EWS) to monitor the impact of their work on exclusions and half termly meetings take place with EWS and the Inspire Team to link in with exclusions and related actions.
- 5.7 The exclusion data is shared with: the LA senior management team termly and annually; schools termly (in addition to awareness training at Governor Network sessions and briefing notes to governors); and pastoral leads (PL) termly at the PL forum, during which the context behind the exclusion is explored and discussion entails around sharing good practice between school PLs. The next step is to develop a cluster-based project aimed at reducing exclusions. This would focus on the support available from the LA to schools and explore how this can further impact on reducing exclusions.
- 5.8 The LA also provides supportive challenge to schools to investigate the circumstances underlying lengthy (above 15 days) and permanent exclusions (pex) to explore whether alternative supportive measures could have been in place, or can be put in place, such as a managed move.
- 5.9 The LA approach to exclusions aligns with the LA's Inclusion Compendium (IC) which contributes to a cohesive model for inclusion, wellbeing and relationship building across schools. The IC highlights the importance of screening measures to identify vulnerable pupils (e.g., PASS survey and the Vulnerability Index – developed by the EPS) and positive and respectful relationships within the school community.
- 5.10 The IC outlines the core practices that support wellbeing, promote positive relationships, and build resilience at a universal, targeted and specialist level. The covid-19 pandemic and continuing pressures on schools has impacted on the LA and schools' ability to work together to embed the approaches and guidance in the IC linked to wellbeing and behaviour in schools, consequently school consultations on the IC have not taken place during 2021-2023. Instead, the IC was re-launched with ALNCo's at ALNCo Forum in the summer term of 2023 and was re-shared with Head Teachers (HTs) and Pastoral Leads in April 2024.
- 5.11 The LA has developed a screening measure – the Vulnerability Index (VI) Tool to identify vulnerable pupils. The VI aims to identify a pupil's level of vulnerability through the identification of individual, school, family and community risk and protective factors.

The tool then provides recommended targeted and specific interventions to promote the protective factors identified as absent from the index. We have now piloted this tool with 2 secondary schools and 3 primary schools, who were then asked to complete a survey to enable us to evaluate their views of the VI tool.

5.12 VI Evaluation survey summary:

- 100% of respondents expressed that they found the VI helpful when identifying vulnerable learners (4 strongly agree, 1 agree).
- 80% of respondents found the Index to be a more effective tool than school measures alone (4 strongly agree, 1 disagree).
- 100% of respondents agreed that the Index is inclusive to all possible 'risk' and 'protective' factors.
- 80% of respondents noted that as a result of using the Index, more pupils have received an intervention (1 strongly agree, 3 agree, and 1 disagree).
- 60% of respondents noted that as a result of the Index alone, more pupils have been identified as vulnerable (3 agree, 1 disagree and 1 N/A).
- 80% reported that the interventions implemented were successful or showing a positive impact (4 agree and 1 N/A).
- Respondents were asked to give detail of how they were measuring this success and respondents stated the following:
 - o *School based scoring system -2,-1,0,+1,=2 and other formal assessment tools.*
 - o *Observations, check-ins.*
 - o *Attendance to school improved and reduction in class charts points/fixed term exclusions.*
 - o *PASS survey and Thrive assessments.*
- 60% of respondents found the Index easy to navigate (1 strongly agree, 2 agree, and 2 disagree).
- 80% of respondents reported having no issues with the Index, and 60% feel that the Index does not need improving.
- There were some mixed findings from the primary schools who completed the index which highlighted that primary schools may need further support from the EPS to complete the index.

5.13 The EPS has developed a suite of training (and interventions) that aim to support school staff understanding of the factors that might underpin pupil behaviour and empower school staff to respond appropriately and thereby make exclusions less likely to occur. The LA has employed and trained Assistant Educational Psychologists through Welsh Government (WG) funding (ALN Grant 20-24, Covid Recovery grant 2020-end of August 2021, ALN Learner Development and Whole School Approach (WSA) to Wellbeing grants 21-24) to deliver these to schools.

5.14 The LA has continued to further develop and extend the range of relevant wellbeing training available to schools from the EPS in response to: feedback from Head Teachers (school surveys), Pastoral Leads (termly meetings), ALNCo's (Autumn term planning and end of year review meetings, and termly ALNCo Forum); and going forward, Youth Forum (2023-2024). This information is evaluated routinely and compared with data on needs that help refine the EPS offer (e.g., EPS data on presenting needs through analysis of EP work requests (2022-2024)). In addition to this, schools have many opportunities to have bespoke training tailored to their circumstances in addition to the PL offer devised for all schools. This has led to the development of training on 'Neurodivergence and wellbeing', 'Behaviour management through emotional regulation and emotion coaching' and 'Positive Psychology'.

- 5.15 In addition to whole school twilight training and workshops, the EPS has also trained school staff to deliver the following interventions during 2021-2024 to support pupil wellbeing and in so doing target pupil behaviour:
- The 6-day ELSA (emotionally literate support assistant) training package,
 - the 2-half day YMHFA (youth mental health first aid) training, and
 - Nurture and Human Givens training packages.
- 5.16 The EPS also continues to provide ongoing half-termly supervision for ELSA and offer half-termly coaching support school staff to implement these interventions and quality assure their integrity.
- 5.17 The LA met its target (2021-2023) to provide 80% of schools one targeted wellbeing training from the EPS. Such that 92% of schools (2021-2022) and 80% (2022-2023) of schools and EOTAS settings received at least 1 targeted wellbeing training and workshop from the EPS.
- 5.18 All secondary schools now have between 1 and 5 staff who have accessed the 11-day trauma-informed school's diploma and are acting as emotionally available adults to vulnerable pupils in school and nearly all (10/12) secondary schools have received jointly developed and delivered emotion regulation training from Community Psychology (Aneurin Bevan University Health Board – ABUHB) and the EPS. In addition to this, the EPS has provided whole school trauma informed training to: 8 primary schools and 1 EOTAS setting (2021-2022); and 16 primaries, 1 EOTAS setting and 1 SRB (2022-2023).
- 5.19 The EPS has developed bitesize recorded online training for schools this academic year (2023-2024), in response to school feedback, to enable them the flexibility to access training at a time that is convenient for them, in order to address issues around staff cover.
- 5.20 Bitesize training is also provided on Lego therapy groups and Draw and Talk interventions to empower staff to set up these interventions. Schools are made aware that they can, through our coaching model, request support to deliver the first, middle and end session.
- 5.21 Since the spring term of 2024 when this bitesize training was made available to schools, 119 staff from 22 settings (17 primary, 3 secondary and 2 EOTAS settings) have accessed our online bitesize training, including:
- 11 staff have accessed Lego-Based Therapy training (4 settings have now begun the coached intervention and 1 setting has started the intervention without coaching support). These interventions began this term (summer term 2024 and are still running).
 - 5 staff have accessed the Draw and Talk training (and 1 primary school has begun the coached intervention this term – summer term 2024).
 - 27 staff accessed the Social Stories.
 - 34 staff accessed the 5-Point Scale training.
 - 3 staff accessed the PACE approach training.
 - 3 staff accessed the Reintegrating learners toolkit training.

- 1 member of staff accessed the PERMA (positive psychology) model training.
- 4 staff accessed the EBSA training.
- 29 staff accessed the Nurture training.
- 3 staff accessed the Growth Mindset training.

5.22 Evaluation of the impact of training on school staffs' confidence and delivery of pupil interventions has shown positive staff evaluations from the staff who have attended the EPS wellbeing training; 75% of staff rated the training as very/extremely effective in developing their knowledge, skills and understanding, and 76% reported that it would inform their future practice. An 8-week post-training follow-up survey highlighted that 100% of schools who responded stated that staff had used theory and strategies from the training in their practice, which had led to a positive impact on the pupils in the school/setting. In particular, schools stated that:

- *'school staff have developed and presented teaching and learning as a result of the training (on neurodivergence) which focuses on developing a consistent approach across the large school' (secondary school on two sites);*
- *'we have wellbeing areas set up in every class, displaying the 7 C's of resilience with regular reference to it';*
- *'as we now have a whole school understanding of trauma informed awareness, we are able to implement school wide strategies and approaches which is sending clearer messages to learners';*
- *'staff are more understanding of behaviours...this has helped staff to be more aware of how and when to deal with children's behaviour more appropriately';*
- *'...I use the mood and feelings cards with them (pupils) and their own self-awareness is improving which is helping some of them to understand where their anxiety comes from';*
- *'The structured program allows opportunities for discussion with pupils to help get to the root of the issues they are facing. The impact on pupils has been great, as we have been able to address and solve issues together with the school. The pupils have felt empowered to brainstorm solutions and hopeful that the situation they are facing is not forever. It has shifted the perception of pupil's behaviour from 'won't' to 'can't,' which has been more beneficial to well-being, and how the pupil is viewed.'*

5.23 Comparison of pre-and post-staff training evaluations has highlighted that over 90% of staff who attended the ELSA (Emotionally Literate Support Assistant) and/or YMHFA (Youth Mental Health First Aid) training reported their knowledge and skills had developed and it would inform their future practice.

5.24 Impact of school delivery of universal pupil interventions on pupil outcome measures: Data was returned from schools for: 353 pupils who accessed an ELSA intervention in 2021-2022, of whom all of these learners were from groups considered to be

vulnerable¹; for 391 pupils in 2022-2023 (of whom, 204 were from vulnerable groups¹); and from 272 pupils in the Autumn and Spring Term of 2023-2024 (of whom, 138 were from vulnerable groups¹).

- 5.25 Inspection of pre-and post-data following the ELSA interventions has highlighted a significant post-intervention improvement on all areas targeted, including staff measures of pupil wellbeing, anger, anxiety, emotional awareness, friendships, independence, growth mindset, self-esteem, social skills, and pupil evaluations ($p < .05$).
- 5.26 Staff use of the YMHFA ALGEE model (which trains staff to: **A**pproach, assess and assist; **L**isten and communicate non-judgementally; **G**ive support and information; **E**ncourage the person to get appropriate professional help; and **E**ncourage other support) has led to pupils being able to express their thoughts, seek help, stay in control and problem solve.
- 5.27 The LA (through the work of the EPS) has continued to develop and expand the range of wellbeing interventions available to schools in response to pupil need. Since 2021-2022 the EPS has provided the following interventions Yoga groups (these were commissioned and ran during 2022-2023), .Breathe Mindfulness (ran during 2021-2023 and following demand from schools has re-started this term – summer term), Lego based therapy and Draw and Talk (since 2021-2022), a primary aged anxiety CBT group (since 2022-2023), secondary aged CBT groups for low mood, anxiety, anxiety and perfectionism (since 2021-2024) and body image (since 2023-2024), and individual CBT sessions (since 2022-2023). 98% of schools and EOTAS settings received at least one wellbeing intervention: CBT groups, primary Lego therapy, .Breathe Mindfulness, Draw and Talk and Yoga groups between 2021-2023.
- 5.28 Pupils in years 4-13 have access to school-based counselling support (this includes access to talking therapies, Art therapy and Music therapy).
- 5.29 *Impact of LA delivered universal interventions (Yoga and .Breathe) on pupil outcomes:* 29 primary schools received the 6-week commissioned Yoga intervention during 2022-2023 with approximately 25 children per school taking part. Pre and post scores indicated an insignificant difference, suggesting that it is unclear if the intervention had any impact on the pupils who attended. However, qualitative feedback for the Yoga intervention was also collated with separate evaluation forms for foundation phase pupils. This revealed that:
- 82.1% of foundation phase and key stage 2 pupils found the sessions very enjoyable or enjoyable.
 - 80.5% of foundation phase and key stage 2 pupils found the sessions very helpful or helpful.
 - 69% of foundation phase pupils enjoyed the sessions and 78.7% of would like to have the sessions again.
- 5.30 Post evaluations were also collated from the class teachers of 18 schools which revealed that following the yoga sessions:
- 66.7% of respondents have seen improvements in class;
 - 50% of respondents have seen improvements in class attendance;
 - 61% of respondents have seen improvements in class behaviour;

¹ Vulnerable groups of learners: FSM, CLA, ALN, living in poverty, excluded or at risk, behaviour or attendance issues, young carer, mental health issues or medical needs, experienced ACEs, service family, young offender or child of offender.

- 61% of respondents have seen improvements in how peers interact with each other;
 - 94.4% of respondents selected 'yes' and are using yoga practices in class following the sessions.
- 5.31 Breathe Mindfulness – 12 classes from 10 primary schools and one secondary school received the .Breathe Mindfulness intervention in 2021-2022; and 20 class groups from 17 primary schools and 3 secondary schools received the intervention in 2022-2023. This intervention did not run during the Autumn and Spring term of 2023-2024 due to staff capacity issues, but has re-started this term due to renewed demand from school. Each group received 1 information session and 4 consecutive weekly sessions led by a facilitator. Evaluation of this intervention highlighted that for the majority of pupils', scores showed a decrease indicating a significant improvement in wellbeing and self-regulation.
- 5.32 In addition to this, positive pupil self-evaluations were received:
- 80% of pupils found the .breathe sessions very/fairly enjoyable
 - 74% of pupils found sessions very/fairly useful
 - 67% of pupils responded that they would definitely/most likely use practices from the .breathe sessions again with the most popular practice being 'plus 2 practice'
 - 74% of pupils would recommend the .breathe course to a friend.
- 5.33 A follow-up evaluation form was sent out to all staff who were present in the .breathe sessions for the 2022-2023 academic year to see if they had seen any progress with pupil behaviour and wellbeing following the intervention and if they had continued to implement the .breathe practices. 9 out of 11 schools responded:
- 88% said the majority of the class found the .breathe sessions very/somewhat useful
 - 66% said they will continue to do the mindfulness practices with the pupils
 - 66% reported a positive impact on their own health and wellbeing since participating in the .breathe sessions
 - 22% have noticed a difference in pupil behaviour since participating in the .breathe sessions.
- 5.34 *Impact of LA delivered targeted interventions:* (Lego Therapy, Draw and Talk and School-based Counselling): Lego Therapy - A total of 54 children from 18 primary schools received a 6-week Lego-based therapy group during 2021-2022; and 39 children from 13 primary schools accessed this intervention in 2022-2023. Evaluation of these groups yielded a significant improvement in post-compared to pre- social skills presented within and outside of the group.
- 5.35 Draw and Talk: 11 pupils in 11 primary schools received a Draw and Talk intervention in 2021-2022; and 7 pupils from 7 primary schools accessed this 12-week group intervention in 2022-2023. A significant improvement was recorded in prosocial behaviour and a reduction in behaviour difficulties post-compared to pre-intervention scores on the SDQ (strengths and difficulties questionnaire) in the interventions running in 2021-2022, but this was not observed in the interventions run in 2022-2023.
- 5.36 School-based Counselling support: 491 pupils in year 4-13 completed an episode of school-based counselling (SBC) in 2021-2022; 527 pupils completed an episode of SBC in 2022-2023; and 338 pupils have completed an episode of SBC in 2023-2024 (to the end of April 2024). CORE-YP scores (which are measured on a scale of 0-30,

with higher scores representing poorer wellbeing) were used to measure the impact of counselling on pupil mood and wellbeing in line with WG requirements.

5.37 The table below highlights the reduction in CORE-YP scores at the end of counselling during these academic years, demonstrating the positive impact of SBC on pupil mood and wellbeing.

Average CORE-YP Score	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024 (to 30 th April 2024)
Start of episode	17.25	15.05	14.35
End of episode	12.25	9.55	8.90

5.38 The Pupil Post-Counselling Evaluation questionnaire highlighted that:

- 78.9% of these pupils agreed or strongly agreed that they feel more able to cope at school since having counselling.
- Pupils agreed or strongly agreed that their relationships with friends (56.4%), teachers (43.2%) and their families (59.9%) have improved since going to counselling (with 'don't know' responses received for 34.5%, 41.4% and 29.2%, respectively for these groups).
- 59.1% of pupils agreed or strongly agreed that their behaviour had improved since accessing counselling (32.4% provided a 'don't know' response to this question).
- 63.4% of pupils agreed or strongly agreed that since they have had counselling, they are more able to concentrate on tasks in and out of school.

5.39 Impact of LA delivered specialist interventions (CBT groups): 13 primary CBT anxiety groups were run during the 2022-2023 academic year with 57 pupils. A further 9 primary CBT anxiety groups were run during the Autumn and Spring term of 2023-2024 with 48 pupils. Scores on the BAI-Y anxiety measure reduced significantly following the group interventions run in 2022-2023; however, while 30/48 of the pupils who received the intervention during 2023-2024 showed a decrease in scores on the BAI-Y anxiety measure, there was no significant decrease for the group as a whole.

5.40 Secondary CBT group interventions : 10 anxiety CBT groups were run during the 2021-2022 academic year in 5 secondary schools with 5 pupils; 19 groups were run during the 2022-2023 academic year with 58 pupils in 11 secondary schools; and a further 9 groups have been run this year during the Autumn and Spring term of 2023-2024 with 39 pupils from 7 secondary schools and 1 EOTAS provision (however, the pupils in the EOTAS provision did not finish the group due to low attendance/disengagement/or engagement with another service - CAMHS). Scores on the BAI-Y anxiety measure reduced significantly following the group interventions delivered between 2021-2024 (one group is due to complete in the summer term 2024)

5.41 Anxiety and perfectionism CBT groups: 4 groups were run with 20 pupils in 3 secondary schools during 2021-2022; 5 groups were run with 27 pupils in 5 secondary schools in 2022-2023; A further 4 groups were run with 16 pupils in 4 secondary schools during the Autumn and Spring term of 2023-2024. Whilst scores on the GAD-7 (generalised anxiety measure) and APS-R (perfectionism scale) reduced significantly following these interventions in 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 highlighting a significant reduction in both anxiety and perfectionism, only a significant reduction was observed in anxiety in the groups ran in 2023-2024, with no significant change observed in perfectionism.

5.42 Low mood CBT groups: 2 groups were run with 7 pupils in 2 secondary schools during 2021-2022; 6 groups were run with 21 pupils from 5 secondary schools and one

EOTAS setting during the 2022-2023 academic year. Pre and post RCADS depression subscale scores indicated a significant reduction in low mood following these group interventions in 2022-2023, but not in 2021-2022; schools have not requested these groups in 23-24.

- 5.43 Body image CBT groups (these began in the spring term of 2023-2024): 13 pupils from 3 different secondary schools have taken part in the part 1 psychoeducation body image group. These groups are still being run. The part 2 intervention, which is for pupils with more severe symptoms will begin later in the summer term of 2024.
- 5.44 Individual CBT support: 5 pupils from 4 secondary schools and 1 EOTAS setting received between 1 and 5 individual CBT sessions at the end of the CBT groups in 2022-2023 to target their elevated levels of anxiety, anxiety and perfectionism, or low mood. This intervention led to a significant improvement in pupil anxiety (reduced from severe to moderate and moderate to mild anxiety, respectively).
- 5.45 Additional secondary aged pupils received individual CBT sessions during 2022-2023 to support them with the following emotional needs that were impacting on their school social anxiety, depression, anxiety and in turn school attendance. Improvements were observed for all 3 pupils with respect to their levels of social anxiety, anxiety, and depression, with all pupils moving down at least one categorisation on the assessed measure, post intervention, for instance from severe to moderate, moderate to mild. Benefits were also observed in their levels of engagement with education, as highlighted below;
- Pupil 1 would rarely leave the house when the therapy started, but by the end of therapy was attending college and regularly socialising with friends outside of the house.
 - Pupil 2, who had completely disengaged from any learning at the start of the sessions, started home tuition prior to therapy finishing.
 - Pupil 3's attendance didn't change, as this was linked to bullying in school, however, their anxiety reduced and they felt more confident about finishing the school year by the end of counselling.
- 5.46 3 pupils started 1:1 CBT in 2022-2023 and attended a total of 8 sessions; these sessions have continued into 2023-2024 for 2 of these pupils. 4 pupils received individual CBT sessions in 2023-2024 (Autumn and Spring Term) which will continue into next term (2 ongoing from the summer term 2023).
- 5.47 1 pupil has completed their sessions (sessions began in the last 6 weeks of the summer term 2023). Sessions targeted the pupil's elevated levels of obsessive-compulsive disorder - OCD and low emotion regulation). Analysis revealed that:
- Post-intervention, this pupil is now no longer presenting with elevated levels of OCD, and during the course of the sessions has been supported to move from part-time community tuition to a full-time EOTAS education placement.
- 5.48 Impact of interventions to support staff wellbeing: The EPS has developed and delivered two, 6-week staff wellbeing support groups to one alternative education provision (Learning Pathway Centre in 2021-2022) and a secondary school (in 2022-2023). This is in recognition of the impact that low staff wellbeing and morale can have on staff relationships with pupils, in terms of the tolerance threshold and ability to respond empathically to pupils; and in turn the impact that poor teacher-pupil relationships can have on pupil wellbeing, learning and behaviour. Positive feedback has been received from the staff who attended the two staff wellbeing

groups. Attendees particularly valued having a protected, empathic space to discuss those work-related factors that are impacting on their wellbeing, in addition to receiving advice around supportive practices that they could put in place to support their wellbeing.

- 5.49 *The 3-year Wales Restorative Approaches Partnership (WRAP) pilot.* The LA has also procured and commissioned through LA resources, WRAP (Wales Restorative Approaches Partnership) to work with 2 school clusters (with the capacity to extend the project to further clusters) with a view to impacting school exclusion and attendance figures.
- 5.50 WRAP provides a 3-year programme to support schools with bespoke training needs linked to their SDP to promote a whole-school approach to emotional wellbeing, which in turn leads to a positive impact on staff and pupil wellbeing, behaviour, and attendance. Work with Cluster 1 began in September 2022. Work with Cluster 2 began in April 2023.
- 5.51 Findings to date: Cluster 1 used WRAP to support their key stage 2-3 transition and to target their year 7 cohort.

Impact: (Data provided by School from 1st year of WRAP intervention)

Year 7 2021/22 (pre-WRAP)	Year 7 2022/23 targeted by WRAP
Behaviour	
450 negatives	186 negatives
9360 positives	15779 positives
48 visits to internal exclusion rooms	12 visits to internal exclusion room
18 fixed term exclusions	6 fixed term exclusions
3 permanent exclusions	0 permanent exclusions
Attendance	
82% attendance	87.7% attendance
40% persistent absentees	20% persistent absentees

Years 7-11 (Data for Cluster 1 taken from PLASC data)		
2021-2022 (pre-WRAP)	2022-2023 (WRAP started)	2023-2024 (2 terms)
4 PEXs	5 PEXs	3 PEXs
239 FTE (0-5 days)	178 FTE (0-5 days)	124 FTE (0-5 days)

- 5.52 Feeder Primary Schools: Caerphilly CBC commissioned WRAP to run a series of individual interviews with staff and pupils from the cluster (38 interviews were conducted in total). It was found that overall, everyone interviewed had noticed an improvement in relationships, behaviour, and attendance, as well as the responses to the behaviour; with the students stating they feel more listened to, and the teachers reporting an improved understanding as to why certain behaviours are being exhibited. The use of daily circle time activities has led to an improvement in peer relationships and development of pupil social skills, and the peer mediation training has led to improved pupil conflict resolution skills. Staff also reported being able to use

restorative conversations in their meetings with parents which has helped to regulate parents and facilitate improved working relationships.

Fixed-term Exclusion data for Feeder Primary Schools 0-5 days (PLASC data)

School	2021-2022 (pre)	2022-2023 (WRAP started Sept 2022)	2023-2024 (2 terms)
Primary 1	23	14	16
Primary 2	11	6	1
Primary 3	0	0	1
Primary 4	3	6	5

In addition to the WRAP intervention received by these two school clusters, the schools also have access to differentiated levels of support from the EPS based on their levels of ALN, FSM and numbers on roll. Further support is also available to schools from the Advisory Service and its Behaviour Support Officers.

5.53 Findings from Cluster 2: The High School also targeted year 7 (they began the WRAP initiative in April 2023). Below are the findings obtained from the school that were presented at the WRAP conference on 14.11.23:

- Pupils in year 7 had a smooth transition.
- No exclusions in Year 7, fewer pupils in Years 8, 9, 10 and 11 have been excluded.
- No pupils in Year 7 have accessed the Inclusion Room, fewer pupils in Years 8, 9, 10 and 11 have accessed the Inclusion Room.
- Of our 'on call' SLT duty relocations not one has been for Year 7. There have been fewer relocations compared to last year whole school.
- Improved attendance in Year 7 - 94.7%
- Improved staff wellbeing.
- In a recent Year 6 transition open evening, Year 7 produced a display about what they love about their school. Positive relationships were the most popular answer that pupils gave, especially with the mention of their form tutors and form time.

Cluster 2 High School Exclusion Data from PLASC:

	2022 - 2023 (WRAP started in April 2023)	2023 – 2024 (2 Terms)
PEX	1	2
FTE	83 (FTE of 0-5 days)	42 (FTE of 0-5 days)

Feeder Primary Fixed-term 0-5 days Exclusion Data from PLASC:

	2022-2023 (WRAP started April 2023)	2023 – 2024 (2 Terms)
Primary 1	7	1
Primary 2	16	3
Primary 3	21	5

Primary 4	1	7
Primary 5	4	0
Primary 6	7	0

5.54 The data above highlights the positive impact that the WRAP initiative is having on improving relationships between staff and pupils and in turn impacting on behaviour, resulting in a reduction in exclusions and an improvement in attendance in both school clusters. Consequently, WRAP has now been extended to a further 2 school clusters this term.

5.55 Work with children and young people who have received a permanent exclusion: The EPS is asked to gather information following a permanent exclusion where it is felt that there is insufficient information around the pupil's needs and wishes to enable an informed decision to be made about the most appropriate educational provision to meet the pupil's needs. This entails gathering the pupil and parental views about school and the exclusion and identifying the pupil's strengths, needs and difficulties. This information is then used to inform recommendations around education provision and strategies to support the pupil's reintegration into an education setting.

5.56 The EPS worked with 39 pupils who were permanently excluded from 38 secondary schools and one primary school in the period from September 2021 to the end of the Spring term 2024. Of these 39 pupils: 13 (33.3%) have integrated into a new mainstream provision, 8 (20.5%) pupils are currently receiving home tuition, 6 (15.4%) pupils have gone to in-school Learning Pathway Centres, 5 (12.8%) have gone to an in-county EOTAS provision, 3 (7.7%) are awaiting placement in a specialist provision and are receiving home tuition in the interim, 2 (5.1%) have gone to an independent in-county EOTAS provision, 1 (2.6%) has gone to an out-of-county mainstream high school and 1 (2.6%) engaged with other services to prepare them for full-time employment.

5.57 The LA also tracks the pupils progress to see if pupils have received additional fixed term exclusions (fte) within their new educational settings: 75.7% have not had any fte, 16.2% have received between 1 and 5 days fte, 5.4% between 5 and 10 days fte, and 2.7% have received a fte of between 10 and 20 days.

5.58 Linked to the data in Appendix 1 - Table 3: Comparison of Fixed Term Exclusions during Term 1 and 2 of 2022-2023 with Term 1 and 2 of 2023-2024, there has been a small increase in the number of fixed term exclusions issued. Encouragingly, the number of days lost to exclusion has decreased by 479.5 days and the number of pupils issued an exclusion has also decreased by 33 pupils in the current academic year. The data also shows that there has been a decrease in the number of exclusions issued to the three vulnerable groups shown in the table. Such that there has been a decrease of 66 fixed term exclusions issued to pupils eligible for FSM's, a decrease of 23 fixed term exclusions issued to children looked after and a decrease of 28 fixed term exclusions issued to pupils who have ALN.

5.59 Conclusion

5.59.1 The LA has a clear process in place to target pupil exclusions through: (i) its self-evaluation approaches; (ii) the EPS professional learning offer to schools – that aims to support schools to better understand and support pupil wellbeing; and (iii) the delivery of interventions which aim to exert a positive impact on pupil (and staff) wellbeing and behaviour, thereby making exclusions less likely to occur. In addition to this, the LA has also commissioned WRAP to work with two school clusters over a 3-

year period to support positive and respectful relationships within the school community and embed the use of a restorative approach to improve relationships between staff, pupils and families and improve pupil exclusion rates and attendance. WRAP has recently been extended to a further 2 school clusters. The LA's approach to exclusions aligns with the LA's Inclusion Compendium (IC). The IC highlights the importance of: screening measures (such as the LA's vulnerability index and PASS survey) to identify vulnerable pupils; positive and respectful relationships within the school community; and the provision of core practices that support wellbeing, promote positive relationships, and build resilience at a universal, targeted and specialist level. The LA also has measures in place to support provision planning and transition into a new setting following a permanent exclusion (pex). The LA also closely tracks the progress of pupils who have received a pex to ensure that their new education setting remains appropriate to meet their needs.

There has been a significant increase in both permanent and fixed term exclusions since pupils returned to school following the Covid-19 Pandemic; this culminated in a peak during the last academic year (2022-2023). The use of permanent exclusions by secondary schools remains a concern for the LA. However, current data suggests a levelling out of fixed term exclusions of 5 days or less in secondary and primary schools and a reduction in the number of pupils receiving exclusions, the number of days lost to exclusion and the number of exclusions issued of 5 days or more. Similarly, there has been a reduction this academic year in the number of exclusions of learners who are looked after, those eligible for free school meals and ALN learners, both in terms of exclusions up to and over 5 days, compared to the same time period last academic year (first two terms).

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 The LA has a key responsibility to monitor pupil exclusion rates and put supportive measures in place to reduce the likelihood of exclusions taking place. The LA does this through consultation with schools (including through head teacher and pastoral lead forums and via the work of the education directorate support teams). The LA has clear self-evaluation processes to monitor and challenge school exclusions and inform the LA where to target resources, which it does through a multi-layered approach. This approach includes the offer of training to all schools to develop their universal and targeted provision, to a Team Around the School approach, and through access to more targeted, bespoke support to target the wellbeing and behaviour needs of the most vulnerable learners who are most at risk of school exclusion.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Staff costs to deliver staff training and interventions have been funded through access to Welsh Government funding provided in the LA Education Grants since 2020. In 2023/2024 these grants totalled circa £800k.
- 8.2 Welsh Government have confirmed a 3-year cycle of support for the WSA to Wellbeing grant, of which the year 2023/24 is the third year of this cycle. Currently the LA employs

9.5 fte staff (assistant educational psychologist, school-based counsellors (SBCs), and music therapists) from the WSA and ALN grants to deliver interventions. Welsh Government have advised indicative funding for ALN of £14.1m a year across Wales. The programmes for ALN are part of the LA Education Grant. The longer-term position remains unclear at present.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The EPS would be reliant on the continuation of Welsh Government funding to continue to finance the expanded SBCS (including Music therapists) and the Assistant EPs who deliver the wellbeing training and interventions under the supervision of the EPs and cognitive behaviour therapist.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 The report reflects with views of the consultees.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Additional Learning Needs and Tribunal Act (Wales) 2018
Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
Framework on Embedding a Whole School Approach to Emotional and Mental Wellbeing (Wales) 2021
Education Act 1996
Equality Act 2010
Social Services and wellbeing Act (2014)
United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
Armed Forces Covenant (Wales)

Author: Dr Kyla Honey, Principal Educational Psychologist

Consultees: Dave Street, Deputy Chief Executive
Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director of Education and Corporate Services
Mark S Williams, Corporate Director for Economy, and Environment
Councillor Carol Andrews, Cabinet Member for Education and Communities
Councillor Teresa Parry, Chair of Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Brenda Miles, Vice Chair of Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee
Sue Richards, Head of Transformation and Education Planning and Strategy
Stephen Harris, Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer
Keri Cole, Chief Education Officer
Sarah Ellis, Lead for Inclusion and ALN
Sarah Mutch, Early Years Manager
Paul Warren, Strategic Lead for School Improvement
Jane Southcombe, Financial Services Manager
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services
Lisa Lane, Head of Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer
Ben Winstanley, Head of Land and Property Services
Steve Pugh, Corporate Communications Manager

Appendix 1:

Table 1: Permanent Exclusions during 2020-2021 to 2023-2024

<u>Provision</u>	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024 – up to Term 2
Secondary Schools	11	29	32	23
Primary Schools	0	1	2	0
3-18 Provision	2	4	5	3
EOTAS Provision	1	2	1	0
Special School	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	14	36	40	26

Table 2: Fixed Term Exclusions during 2020-2021 to 2023-2024

	Number of FTE			
	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024 up to Term 2
Secondary Schools	758	1324	1562	1052
<i>5 days or less</i>	<i>701</i>	<i>1210</i>	<i>1446</i>	<i>995</i>
<i>Over 5 days</i>	<i>57</i>	<i>114</i>	<i>116</i>	<i>57</i>
Primary Schools	151	294	302	198
<i>5 days or less</i>	<i>147</i>	<i>286</i>	<i>286</i>	<i>191</i>
<i>Over 5 days</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>6</i>
3-18 Provision	104	266	203	145
<i>5 days or less</i>	<i>102</i>	<i>262</i>	<i>192</i>	<i>140</i>
<i>Over 5 days</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>5</i>
EOTAS Provision	5	30	76	32
<i>5 days or less</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>71</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Over 5 days</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
Special School	2	2	7	3
<i>5 days or less</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Over 5 days</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1</i>
Number of FTE 5 days or less	957	1785	2000	1354
Number of FTE over 5 days	63	131	150	76
TOTAL	1020	1916	2150	1430

Table 1 and Table 2 highlight that there has been a significant increase in both permanent and fixed term exclusions since pupils returned to school following the Covid-19 Pandemic; this culminated in a peak during the last academic year (2022-2023). The use of permanent exclusions by secondary schools remains a concern for the LA (Table 1). However, current data suggests a levelling out of fixed term exclusions of 5 days or less in secondary and primary schools and a reduction in the number of pupils receiving exclusions, the number of days lost to exclusion and the number of exclusions issued of 5 days or more (Table 2).

Similarly, there has been a reduction this academic year in the number of exclusions of learners who are looked after, those eligible for free school meals and ALN learners, both in terms of exclusions up to and over 5 days, compared to the same time period last academic year – first two terms (see Table 3 below).

Table 3: Comparison of Fixed Term Exclusions during Term 1 and 2 of 2022-2023 with Term 1 and 2 of 2023-2024 including vulnerable groups

	1 st Sept 22– 31 st March 23					1 st Sept 23 – 22 nd March 24				
	Term 1 & 2 2022/23					Term 1 & 2 2023/24				
	PEX	FTE		No. of days	No. of pupils	PEX	FTE		No. of days	No. of pupils
		0-5 days	5 + days				0-5 days	5 + days		
Secondary Schools (inc. 3-18 Provision)	24	1099	89	3002	621	26	1119	61	2576.5	594
Primary Schools (inc. 3-18 Provision)	2	189	10	402.5	98	0	207	8	348.5	92
TOTAL	26	1288	99	3404.5	719	26	1326 (+38)	69 (-30)	2925 (-479.5)	686 (-33)
FSM	16	738	51	1847.5	390	16	672 (-66)	36 (-15)	1478.5 (-369)	324 (-66)
CLA	1	83	9	252	38	0	60 (-23)	1 (-8)	105 (-147)	27 (-11)
ALN	6	332	25	854.5	167	1	304 (-28)	16 (-9)	689.5 (-165)	135 (-32)

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EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 4TH JUNE 2024

SUBJECT: PUPIL ATTENDANCE

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR EDUCATION AND CORPORATE SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide members with an overview of the strategies currently being deployed to improve pupil attendance. This is identified as a main priority for improvement in the 'Pursuing Excellence Together' education strategy.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 After several years with limited results, pupil attendance improved in both 2018 and 2019. In 2019, secondary attendance (94%) was above the national average and primary attendance (94.7%) was in line with the national average. During this period, the percentage of pupils with less than 80% attendance (persistent absenteeism) also reduced. These outcomes were a result of effective partnership working between the local authority and schools to strengthen processes for improving attendance.

However, as in all local authorities across Wales, attendance has been negatively affected by the pandemic, and therefore, is a priority for all schools and education settings across Caerphilly. The current attendance figure for Caerphilly, up to the end of March 2024 is in line with the Welsh National average figure of 90.3%. This is an improving picture compared to the same period last academic year where the attendance for Caerphilly to the end of March 23 was 89.1% compared to the national average of 89.5%.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To note the impact of strategies to improve pupil attendance and provide members with the opportunity to ask questions, seek further clarification and offer views.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Members are asked to consider the approach the local authority has adopted in the ambition to recover pupil attendance data to pre-covid levels. To achieve this, all stakeholders in education need to be fully committed to this ambitious shared goal.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1. The data below identifies the improvements in pupil attendance, comparing March 2023 to 2024. Although this data is positive, with an increase in all the indicators, there are still challenges ahead. The most notable challenge for schools is closing the gap in attendance between e-FSM and n-FSM pupils.

Comparison of March 2023 and March 2024

Mar-23	ALL PUPILS	FSM	NON-FSM	Mar-24	ALL PUPILS	FSM	NON-FSM
Secondary	86.80%	79.80%	88.70%	Secondary	88.10%	82.30%	89.90%
Primary	91.10%	87.00%	92.60%	Primary	92.30%	89.10%	93.60%
All	89.10%	84.10%	90.70%	All	90.30%	86.10%	91.80%

At the end of March 2023, overall school attendance in Caerphilly stood at 89.1%. At the end of March this academic year, it is 90.3%. This is an increase of 1.2%. eFSM learners have shown an even greater improvement, increasing from 84.1% at the end of March 2023, to 86.1% at the end of March 2024. Primary School average has increased from 91.1% to 92.4% over the same period, and Secondary schools have increased from 86.8% to 88.1%.

Caerphilly is currently ranked 13th out of 22 local authorities in Wales in terms of attendance (April 2024). This is a positive outcome as Caerphilly currently has the second highest FSM percentage compared to the other local authorities,

22 schools are now showing data higher than pre-covid (end of school year 2018/19)

The data demonstrates that improving attendance continues to be a challenge in the post-COVID period, but that we are starting to see improvements. The local authority continues to focus on vulnerable learners including those eligible for Free School Meals, which can be evidenced in the data above. To support this approach, the data team have introduced sharing individual school data relating to pupils with Additional Learning Needs (ALN), Children Looked After (CLA) and male/female characteristics.

Similarly, the number of pupils who are absent for at least 20% of sessions (persistent absentees) remains too high. There are currently 2653 pupils with attendance below 80%, although this is an improvement on the previous year, where there were 3291 pupils. The threshold for persistent absenteeism has recently increased to 90% which means the number of pupils within this category will be even higher.

The gap between authorised and unauthorised attendance has closed over the last 12 months by 1%. The local authority has been working hard to ensure that, overall, schools are increasing the levels of challenge to parents around non-attendance.

Processes to improve pupil attendance have become embedded over time and include:

- Monthly attendance data shared with all schools.
- Collaborative meetings between the school and local authority as part of the ‘Team Around the School’ process.
- Self-evaluation activities
- Headteacher briefing meetings.
- Scrutiny and cabinet reports and follow-up challenge

5.1.1 The emergence of a collective approach to improving attendance and reducing exclusions.

Partnership with Inclusion Services continues to become further aligned and strategic as a response to the continued priorities to improve attendance and reduce exclusions. In line with our approach to purposeful self-evaluation, this has been an ongoing process since the Covid-19 pandemic that continues to evolve based on emerging needs.

The diagram below represents the three-tier strategic approach that demonstrates the consistency and commonality across both services. However, it is important to note that the example strategies below are not in their infancy but have been embedded over time. There are also a range of other examples not included in the diagram.

Improving attendance and reducing exclusions

		Improving attendance examples	Reducing exclusions examples
1	Supporting school self-evaluation. →	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance supported self-evaluation activities. • Presentations to governors. • Team around the school. • Monthly data. • SDP exemplars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion and exploration of exclusion data at termly Pastoral Leaders forum • Data is shared with all heads termly
2	Wider professional learning offer →	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Termly workshops for FLOs. • Attendance circles training. • Reintegrating learner’s toolkit training • EBSA training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EPS wellbeing training offer • 3-year WRAP (Wales Restorative Approaches Partnership) pilot
3	Support for individuals/groups – bespoke. →	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School consultations - EWS • Targeted intervention - EWS • Link meetings between EPs and EWS. • Llais and EBSA support • KS3/NEETs – Inspire workers • FPNs/prosecutions – legal processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EPS wellbeing interventions offer linked to Inclusion Compendium • EPS phased model of service delivery

5.2 Impact of the three tier approach.

The following sections illustrate the impact of some of the main activities to support schools.

Supporting school self-evaluation – sample of support activities

5.2.1 Attendance self-evaluation

Supported self-evaluation activities are characterised by the following:

- Close scrutiny of roles and responsibilities, processes and strategies to consider the impact on pupil attendance data.
- High quality professional dialogue with an appropriate primary or secondary practitioner with school leadership experience. Meetings also include the link education welfare officer to verify information and consider ways to strengthen partnership working.
- Opportunities to gather the views of additional stakeholders including school clerks, pastoral leads, pupils and governors.
- A formal summary report that can be shared with stakeholders and contribute to school self-evaluation.
- In addition to action points for the school, the report includes opportunities to share best practice and recommendations for the EWO to include in ongoing school consultations.

Almost half of all schools have taken part in the process. In some cases, schools have requested a wider process of evaluation and support through an attendance and wellbeing review. This process involves senior inclusion and school improvement officers collaborating. Outcomes usually culminate in an ongoing Team Around the School process to monitor progress against the recommendations.

Feedback from headteachers on this process has been welcomed and identified as a tool to support their own self-evaluation.

5.2.2 Attendance Data

Attendance data is shared between schools on a monthly basis. Data includes:

- Overall pupil attendance:
- Difference with the previous year (allowing for seasonal changes)
- Difference with the previous month;
- Difference from the end of 22-23
- Difference from the end of 18-19 (pre-covid data)
- FSM vs non-FSM data
- Persistent absenteeism $\leq 90\%$
- Persistent absenteeism $< 80\%$

To support this approach, the data team have also begun sharing individual school data relating to ALN, CLA, and male/female on a termly basis.

The local authority is clear in the intent and purpose of sharing attendance data; that is, to allow school to identify schools with similar e-FSM profiles and share best practice where schools are beginning to make significant improvements to the data.

Feedback from schools has been very positive to this approach.

5.2.3 Team Around the School

Two secondary schools have taken part in a Team Around the School approach, whereby they have attended monthly meetings with the Strategic Lead for School Improvement, the Lead EWO and EWO to focus on attendance processes. The self-evaluation toolkit provided a baseline assessment, with recommendations and areas for improvement identified.

The process has allowed open and honest conversations and has resulted in some positive changes in schools.

Therefore, Team Around the School has facilitated purposeful and detailed discussions with the schools that has led to bespoke support.

5.3 Wider professional learning offer – sample of support activities

5.3.1 Termly attendance workshops

Secondary school workshops are held in person, but due to the sheer volume of primary staff, these are still held via MS Teams. These workshops allow the education welfare service to deliver key messages. Spring Term agenda items included:

- Children Missing in Education (CME)
- Cluster approach to promoting attendance
- Legal Interventions
- Sharing best practice

School staff evaluations indicate positive feedback to the workshops and suggestions for agenda items are always accommodated, meaning schools are receiving the information they request.

5.3.2 Attendance seminars for headteachers

Following a request during a headteacher meeting, additional seminars have been implemented for headteachers. Sessions, led by the Strategic Lead for School Improvement and the Principal Educational Psychologist, focus primarily on the role of leadership in securing good attendance. Themes for discussion have included:

- Estyn thematic report on secondary attendance
- The updated 'Belonging, Engaging and Participating' guidance with specific focus on the purpose and use of reduced timetables.
- Utilising the Inclusion Compendium to improve attendance and reduce exclusions.

Feedback from headteachers and local authority officers has been very positive. These meetings are an opportunity for stakeholders to have open, honest dialogue on challenging topics, acknowledging the challenge for all involved. This initiative helps to reinforce the local authority's commitment to development positive relationships with headteachers built on collaboration, co-construction and trust.

5.4 Bespoke support for individuals/groups – sample of support activities

5.4.1. Link meetings between Educational Welfare Service and Educational Psychologists

While the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) has already developed a reintegration toolkit for learners which schools can use to support pupils to return to school, both colleagues in the Educational Welfare Service (EWS) and the EPS have noted increasing numbers of pupils with increasingly complex needs.

To better understand the particular needs of these learners, senior officers from the EWS and EPS have been meeting each half term to jointly review cases that are causing particular concerns, taking a more wholistic overview of issues impacting learners' engagement to identify potential next steps to support their re-engagement with services and ideally, educational provision.

These meetings have a number of functions:

- provide a forum to review work undertaken to date in a multiagency context looking at all of the pupil's presenting needs i.e. not just their attendance for instance as the majority of pupils reviewed also had ALN.
- provide a psychological perspective on the reasons why pupils have stopped attending – initial reflections, on cases reviewed to date, suggest attachment and trauma related difficulties are a factor in some of the most “stuck” cases for instance.
- provide a safe space for professionals to problem solve cases together, building on the skills and strengths of both teams, to inform actions for the school and the EWO. In instances where direct work by the Educational Psychologist (EP) may be required, this is flagged with the pupil's schools so they can prioritise that pupil for their own EP to see.

This is a useful and productive process which reinforces the increasing alignment and coordination of teams across the directorate. Given the small number of cases and their complexity, establishing meaningful impact measures is difficult until the number of cases reviewed increases. However, the following measures will be considered after two terms:

- Levels of attendance where the pupil has been attending school – before and after the review meeting (no cases have been attending school at all up to this point).
- The learner's degree of engagement in educational opportunities if they are not attending school.
- The number of cases requiring further EP/ CAMHS/ Neuro Developmental assessment and any outcomes associated with these further assessments.

5.4.2 Fixed Penalty Notices/Prosecutions/Legal processes

The following shows a breakdown of legal interventions across the borough over the last five years:

Fixed Penalty Notices issued by the local authority or its schools for non-attendance at school in academic years:

2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	Sept. 2023 to present
204	123	Nil	Nil	190	166

Prosecutions pursued by the local authority against parents/carers for non-attendance at school (including details of the outcome if completed) in the academic years:

2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	Sept. 2023 to present
72 prosecutions, 71 fined with 2 parents also given conditional discharge, 1 parent given 40 hours unpaid work	25 prosecution 25 fined	Nil	2 (attendance prosecution not FPN related) 2 fined	33 prosecutions 30 parents fined 3 cases dismissed	13

Although legal interventions are a last resort, the number issued in 2018/19 coincides with the rise in attendance across the local authority where the percentage of pupils attending school regularly reached its peak so far. The local authority recognises that there are cases where legal intervention is a helpful tool for schools where all other strategies have been explored. Senior education welfare officers attend governing body meetings to support governors in making this decision. There are, however, a high number of severe cases of anxiety or missed diagnosis, and many more cases whereby legal intervention is not appropriate.

5.5 Next steps to maximise support to schools.

- Continue to self-evaluate the impact of support activities on pupil attendance. Utilise data and feedback from stakeholders to determine which activities prove most effective. Acknowledge that the support currently being utilised is leading to improvement in data; particularly for e-FSM learners.

- Continue to promote school self-evaluation as the key mechanism to improve attendance in each local setting. Aim for all schools to have undertaken this activity by Autumn half term.
- Increase the use of Team Around the School for settings which have not made the expected progress in attendance data.
- Continue to build on developing existing relationships to tackle issues associated with attendance that are challenging to resolve. Processes include:
 - Headteacher seminars
 - Partnership working with the educational psychology service.
- Maintain grant funding arrangements:
 - EWO per cluster model
 - Inspire project to support learners between the ages 11 -14.
 - Community Focused Schools with additional focus on promoting good attendance amongst families.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 Pupils with poor attendance are more likely to fall behind with their work, have gaps in their learning, and therefore, achieve lower examination results. This will affect their life chances for the future. We all have the responsibility to ensure that our pupils achieve the best start in life, so they can reach their full potential.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Staff costs to deliver staff training and interventions have been funded through a mixture of funding from core services, augmented by access to additional Welsh Government funding specifically aimed towards promoting excellent pupil attendance.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Additional funding from Welsh Government has built capacity to increase the number of educational welfare and family liaison officers working across the Local Authority. Cessation of this funding would have implications that would need to be considered and monitored.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 The report incorporates the views of the consultees. Feedback identified the need to recognise ongoing strategies to improve pupil attendance outside of the work of the education welfare service.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 None

Author: Jaime Duggan, School Improvement Officer

Consultees: Dave Street, Deputy Chief Executive
Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director, Education and Corporate Services
Councillor Teresa Parry, Chair Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Brenda Miles, Vice Chair Education and Social Services Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Carol Andrews, Cabinet Member for Education and Communities
Keri Cole, Chief Education Officer
Paul Warren, Strategic Lead for School Improvement
Debbie Hartevelde, Director – Education Achievement Service (EAS)
Sally Speedy, Principal School Improvement Partner (EAS)
Hayley Davies-Edwards, Principal School Improvement Partner (EAS)
Sue Richards, Head of Transformation and Education Planning and Strategy
Jane Southcombe, Finance Manager
Sarah Ellis, Lead for Inclusion and ALN
Sarah Mutch, Early Years Manager
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