

# DRAFT ATTAINMENT STRATEGY FOR CAERPHILLY

November 2018

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## 1. Strategic Context

In March 2018, Caerphilly adopted Wellbeing Objectives for 2018-2023:

**Well-being Objective 1 – Improve education opportunities for all**

Well-being Objective 2 – Enabling employment

Well-being Objective 3 – Address the supply, condition and sustainability of homes throughout the county borough and provide advice, assistance or support to help improve people’s health and well-being

Well-being Objective 4 – Promote a modern, integrated and sustainable transport system that increases opportunity, promotes prosperity and minimises the adverse impacts on the environment

Well-being Objective 5 – Creating a County Borough that supports a Healthy Lifestyle in accordance with the Sustainable Development Principle within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

Well-being Objective 6 – Support citizens to remain independent and improve their well-being

This attainment strategy is designed to progress Well-being Objective 1. The success of this objective is further defined through the following outcomes:

1. Aim to reduce the impact of poverty within early years.
2. **Raise standards of attainment.**
3. **Reduce the impact of poverty on attainment for both vocational and non-vocational qualifications to provide equality of opportunity.**
4. Help those who are not able to follow a traditional attainment path.
5. Support learning that enables young and adult employment opportunities including a focus on ‘future skills’
6. **Improve ‘Digital Skills’ for all ages.**
7. **Improve the learning environment.**
8. **Safeguard all children and young people in order to create a climate for learning, particularly for those most vulnerable.**

The actions set out within the attainment strategy are designed to impact positively on **Outcome 2, 3, 6, 7 and 8**.

## 2. Vision

The vision for this attainment strategy is:

*To raise standards and ensure our learners are healthy, confident, proud and ambitious and can access high quality educational opportunities, settings and experiences.*

## 3. The Caerphilly Context

The Caerphilly County Borough covers an area stretching from the Brecon Beacons National Park in the north, to Cardiff and Newport in the south. It is bordered to the west by Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taff, and to the east by Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen local authorities.

The area lies at the heart of both the South Wales Valleys and the Cardiff Capital Region. The Caerphilly county borough occupies some 108 square miles (28,000 hectares) of the Valleys area of South East Wales. It is a little over 18.6 miles long and nearly 11 miles wide, and is formed by the valleys of three rivers: the Rhymney, Sirhowy and Ebbw. The county borough has 180,000 residents living across a mixture of urban and rural communities. Three quarters of the county borough is used for agriculture and forestry.

There are around 25,000 school age pupils attending schools across the County Borough with around a third of the learners in the region sitting qualifications at key stage 4 (GCSE or equivalent) each year coming from Caerphilly Schools.

In Caerphilly there are:

- 72 Primary Phase Schools,
- 1 Voluntary Aided Primary School,
- 12 Secondary Schools,
- 1 3 to 18 School,
- 1 Pupil Referral Unit,
- 1 Special School
- 2 Further Education colleges across the Caerphilly Borough
- 250+ Registered childcare providers

Our school improvement service is provided by the Education Achievement Service (EAS), the education consortium for South East Wales.

There is Youth provision across the borough supporting both universal access and more targeted support for young people and their families, as well as continued delivery of quality library services and community centres.

Our adult education provision continues to deliver quality learning opportunities across the borough.

There are significant levels of deprivation with 29.7% of statutory school age pupils living in 20% of the most disadvantaged areas in Wales. 14 of the 110 areas in the Caerphilly county borough are in the top 10% of the most disadvantaged areas in Wales.

22.3% percent of Caerphilly pupils on roll of statutory school age are entitled to free school meals, ranking the authority 20<sup>th</sup> out of the 22 local authorities in Wales between 2015 and 2017 providing a challenging context.

Although the percentage of learners living in workless households within Caerphilly county borough has decreased, the percentage remains higher than the Wales average and is the second highest amongst local authorities in the Gwent region. Caerphilly county borough has the second highest rate of free school meals in Wales.

Homelessness is decreasing nationally and Caerphilly county borough has a much higher rate of homeless prevention than the Wales average or across other areas of Gwent.

Caerphilly county borough Council is committed to tackling the causes of poverty and ensures the five anti-poverty grant programmes are working collaboratively to maximize reach to the most vulnerable.

The Council has listed Improving education opportunities for all as the first of its Wellbeing Objectives and has committed to an ambitious 21<sup>st</sup> century schools investment programme.

Band A of the 21<sup>st</sup> century school programme is nearing an end with 3 new schools built and 3 schools improved. Work is currently underway to agree the funding to progress the equally ambitious Band B programme.

The Cardiff Capital Region City Deal is another ambitious investment programme to develop the transport infrastructure and connectivity as well as expanding employment and apprenticeships to positively promote regeneration of communities.

Additional contextual information to be agreed and included...

## 4. Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles have been agreed by the Caerphilly Learning Partnership to underpin the work of all partners in pursuing excellence in learning. The principles underpin this strategy and guide the work and behaviours of all contributors.

### Leadership

There will be strong leadership at all levels to deliver excellence in learning. A variety of approaches will be required to suit different circumstances. However, we believe for leadership to be sustainable, effective, and to have maximum impact, a distributed style is most often preferable. This empowers everyone to be part of decision making, and to take on responsibilities by developing leadership at all levels. We are all accountable to learners in our community for the outcomes they achieve and it is our collective responsibility to ensure needs are met.

### Learning offer

The learning offer stems from the variety of institutions and services in Caerphilly and the quality of the collaborations and partnership working between them. The learning offer available will be broad, rich, diverse and relevant to the needs of learners so that all have access to appropriate career paths and lifelong learning.

### Our workforce

We recognise our workforce to be the most important resource in supporting our learners. Their wellbeing is paramount. We want a well-motivated and enthusiastic team with a shared ambition for success. We will provide access to a variety of professional learning opportunities so as to equip the workforce with the necessary skills and experiences which are relevant to their role, and the workforce will be fully involved in the co-design of these opportunities. All of the workforce are entitled to be treated fairly, with dignity and respect. We are committed to appointing the very best workforce, and to providing opportunities for gaining experiences across learning settings when appropriate.

### Community focus

All stakeholders will have the opportunity to participate in the shaping of delivery in the pursuit of excellence in learning. Learning provision will be at the heart of our communities, acting both as a hub and reaching out to all residents. Working with families will maximise the learning opportunities for learners to lead fulfilled adult lives.

### Collaboration and partnership working for lifelong learning

In Caerphilly, the delivery of education and the provision of learning opportunities takes place in the day and evening, at weekends and throughout the calendar year, whether provided by schools, Further Education institutions, the Adult and Community Learning service, the Youth Service, or the wide range of our partner agencies from both the statutory and voluntary sectors. This richness and diversity of educational services, together with the collaborations and partnership working between them, enhances the quality of learning in the county borough.

### Responsiveness

We will be responsive to the learning needs of our community and ensure that those needs are reflected in the courses and opportunities which will be planned and provided. We will also be proactive, agile and innovative in our approach towards initiatives and employers' skills requirements.

### Resilience

We will ensure that resilience is developed at both individual and organisational levels. Individual resilience will focus on developing everyone's ability to manage challenges and problems, to learn and use skills such as perseverance and optimism and to handle new situations. Organisational resilience will focus on how we can adapt to the challenges we will face but will also consider the individual within the organisation and the processes and culture those individuals work with on a daily basis

### Welsh language

The Welsh language is at the heart of our ambition to achieve excellence. Through celebrating, promoting and supporting the use of the Welsh language we will ensure that all stakeholders will benefit from the richness of learning and cultural opportunities.

### Effective support

Effective support is an essential ingredient in our pursuit of excellence. Through co-constructed partnerships, specialist support, collaboration and mentor work, there will be a commitment to support learners, the workforce, and leaders in accordance with their specific needs or entitlement, along their chosen pathway.

### Celebration of achievement

We will ensure success and achievements are properly recognised and celebrated. This must be reflected in our day to day working relationships as well as through other means such as social media, traditional media, local events, and participation in competitions and contests. We will celebrate the success of both learners and the workforce, of teams and of individuals, throughout the community.

### Constructive challenge

We will thrive within a culture of self-reflection and mutual challenge. As stakeholders, we will put forward our ideas and trust one another to offer views and to question the proposals so that they are honed. Challenges should be evidence based and managed in a mutually respectful way.

### Effective use of resources

Resources will be shared across sectors to encourage collaborative activities ensuring maximum impact on learner outcomes. Leaders have a significant role in developing collaborative partnerships to ensure resources, human and material, are effectively managed and used.

## 5. #TeamCaerphilly - Our Narrative

“Every child deserves a champion – an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection and insists that they become the best that they can possibly be.”

**Rita Pierson**

#TeamCaerphilly’s narrative, the approach that we intend to take in everything we do to try and improve outcomes, is aligned directly to the four enabling objectives of Welsh Government’s Education in Wales: Our National Mission policy.

### Inspirational Leaders Working Collaboratively to Raise Standards

Inspirational leaders create a compelling sense of direction and purpose for every stakeholder and generate an energy and excitement for driving improvement and raising standards.

In order to develop sustainable and long term improvements across every school in Caerphilly, we will develop an environment that supports our school leaders to work collectively to:

- reach the highest standards of accredited professional leadership practice in education
- regularly access high quality coaching and mentoring from within and outside of the education sector to continually refine leadership practice
- challenge themselves to learn from the best by regularly exploring leadership practice at high performing schools across the region and bringing that practice in to Caerphilly Schools.

- communicate and network with peer leaders openly, transparently and regularly to share existing good practice, challenges and plans for improvement
- ensure improvement activity is focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning available to our learners
- assess the progress being made in our schools in an open, frank and transparent manner and be accountable for school performance and responsible for the development of plans that will drive improvement
- be positive, resilient, energetic and well and have access to wellbeing support should any of that change
- champion the vision, guiding principles and foundation stones set out within this strategy

### Developing a High Quality Education Profession

A school's long term success is built on the collective capabilities and qualities of its teachers. We will aim to create the conditions that enable Caerphilly's teachers to:

- reach the highest standards of accredited professional practice and ensure that learners can access vibrant, focused and engaging content at all times.
- challenge themselves to learn from the best by regularly exploring practice and pedagogy at high performing schools across the region and bringing it in to practice within Caerphilly Schools.
- be positive, resilient, energetic and well and have access to wellbeing support should any of that change

### Strong & Inclusive Schools Committed to Excellence, Equity & Wellbeing

Caerphilly will strive to ensure that its learners are supported to be emotionally and physically ready to learn in a safe, supportive and nurturing environment.

Every leader, teacher and learner must have the opportunity to become the best that they can be while being supported to overcome any barriers that may be inhibiting their progress.

Schools in Caerphilly should:

- offer highly engaging, challenging and inclusive lessons that meet the needs of all learners
- maximise exposure to these high quality learning opportunities by raising attendance levels through the application of innovative new strategies, sharing these widely when good progress is made
- do everything they can to reduce the levels of exclusions and, in doing so, maximise the time available for learners to be in school
- have effective and innovative strategies in place to raise the achievements of vulnerable learners and learners entitled to free school meals

### Robust assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements supporting a self-improving system

In order to ensure that the correct improvement methodologies are being applied to the right parts of the Education system in Caerphilly, every contributor must be clear on their relative strengths and the areas that require improvement, be able to evidence that position and be accountable for driving improvements that will enable learners to achieve better outcomes.

Education in Caerphilly will be a self-improving system that is built upon objective and evidence based assessment, evaluation, improvement, reflection and refinement.

Organisations within the Caerphilly Education System should:

- feel supported and encouraged to be completely open, honest and transparent when accounting for their relative position, progress made to date and plans for improvement
- be able to evidence their position through effective and mature approaches to self-evaluation
- be willing to further strengthen self-evaluation processes and school positions by exposing them to external challenge and moderation
- have a clear and consistently applied strategy for setting targets, managing performance and progress and measuring value

- feel a sense of belonging and connection to the ethos of #TeamCaerphilly and hold a desire to share knowledge and raise standards right across the system
- celebrate their achievements widely and proudly

## 6. Identifying the Challenges Ahead

In order to identify the challenges ahead and to design and implement appropriate actions and interventions, the current position of the Education system in Caerphilly must be robustly and accurately assessed.

In respect of the formation of this strategy, the three key elements that have helped frame the current position are as follows:

- The Council's extensive and ongoing self-evaluation that sets out the Council's relative strengths and areas for improvement and supports this position with a moderated evidence base
- The Education Achievement Service (EAS) Professional Advice following the 2017/18 outcomes that is drawn from a range of data and historic trends
- The outcomes of the summit meetings held with each secondary school during September and October at which underlying contributors to school performance were assessed and improvement plans shared

The findings and relevant observations from each of these inputs are set out through the remainder of this section

### Caerphilly Education Service Self Evaluation

The Council's Self Evaluation concludes and evidences the following as relative strengths:

- Performance at foundation phase is good. Performance of the Foundation Phase Indicator in 2018 compares favourably against the regional South East Wales Consortia (SEWC) and Welsh averages. Trends over time are favourable compared to the SEWC region and Welsh average. Of note, performance in Mathematical Development at Outcome 5+ and 6+ compare favourably against the regional SEWC and Welsh averages. This is also reflected in the performance in trends over a three year period.
- Overall, performance at the end of Key Stage 2 is good. Performance at the expected +1 in English, Welsh 1st Language and mathematics remains above the national average.

- Performance at Key Stage 3 continues to improve. A range of indicators measuring performance at the end of Key Stage 3 over the previous 3 years has increased and compares favourably against the Welsh average. Trends over time are favourable compared to both the SEWC region and Welsh average.
- Standards of achievement (additional awards, national and local accreditations) through the Youth Service (16-25) is good. This is evidenced through the development of skills in 5 key areas essential for personal, social and educational development.
- Despite an increase in 2017/18, trends over time indicate that strategies to reduce the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs) are effective.
- The number of schools categorised as red and amber in primary, infant and junior schools has decreased over time. An increasing number of schools are being categorised as 'green', therefore requiring less support. At present, 45% of primary, infant and junior schools have been categorised as 'green'. This is an increase of 22 percentage points on the previous year.
- The Local Authority currently has a relatively low number of schools in a statutory category. At present, there is one primary school and one secondary school in a statutory category. Where schools have been placed in an Estyn follow-up category, nearly all primary, infant and junior schools make good progress within the agreed timeframe and are removed. At present, 1.4% of primary schools and 8.3% of secondary schools are in a statutory category.
- School engagement with the Healthy Schools scheme has ensured that Caerphilly has achieved the target of 95% of schools to have reached Phase 3 or above. Caerphilly has achieved above the 10% target figure of schools to achieve NQA status. At present, only eight other authorities across Wales have achieved this level of success. Caerphilly is only one of three Local Authorities to have a Special School achieve the Healthy Schools National Quality Award.
- Flying Start Programmes provide effective intensive bespoke interventions in conjunction with health visitors and family support workers.
- The implementation of the Welsh Government Childcare Offer has been effective. Caerphilly was an early implementer and was able to roll out the offer to the full Caerphilly borough within seven months. Feedback from Welsh Government has been very positive.

- The Youth service participation structures and provision have been recognised by Welsh Government and the Children's Commissioner for Wales as one of the most effective nationally. Excellent practice within the Youth service has been recognised annually through the Youth Work Excellence Awards.
- Caerphilly has been proactive in stimulating demand for Welsh medium education across the borough including development of substantial Welsh medium childcare provision, primary schools and secondary school across 2 sites. The commitment to continue to provide an increased number of places is demonstrated through plans in the 21st century school Band B capital programme, and the successful securing of funding for all Welsh medium capital programme bids.
- Students entered for Associated Board and Trinity Guildhall examinations via Caerphilly Music Service have resulted in a 100% pass rate. A record number of more able and talented pupils are supported via the regional Four Counties Orchestra and Wind band. Caerphilly Music Service is the only remaining Local Authority in Wales that provides a subsidy for schools to support students from an economic disadvantaged background.
- The Junior Forum, one of a few in Wales, is recognised by Welsh Government as an effective and accessible mechanism for participation. Nearly all students demonstrate an increased understanding of children's rights as well as demonstrating a progression in soft skills attainment. All young people actively involved in the Youth Forum feel that they influence decision making through the youth forum, and demonstrate progression in personal and social skills.
- The Cabinet Member for Education plays a pivotal role in the strategic planning of education across Caerphilly. The scrutiny committee play an important role in self-evaluation processes and holding the education directorate to account.
- There is a breadth of skills and knowledge alongside a range of experiences across the leadership team.
- Processes around self-evaluation and service improvement planning continue to improve.
- There are effective and strategic monitoring and evaluation processes in place around the planning and delivery of the 21st Century Schools programme.

- Analysis of the most recent Children’s Public Library User Surveys highlights the encouraging levels of customer satisfaction that persist among users under 16 years of age. The Library Service achieved 18 out of 18 core entitlements against the Welsh Public Library Standards in 2017/18.
- CCBC’s adult education service is an active member of the Gwent Five County Partnership for Adult Community Learning (ACL). Our ACL department has achieved the highest successful completion & attainment rates (learners who start and complete courses) for the last five years.
- In 2017-18 the Education Service remained within its budget allocation for the year and contributed to an increase in Authority balances at year end. To date the Service has successfully achieved its MTFP annual savings target.
- Financial planning has enabled Managers to target investment for specific interventions within Schools and other areas of the Directorate (e.g. £173k identified for Behaviour & Mental Health issues; match funding for European Projects – Bridges into Work 2 and Working Skills for Adults 2 which have recently been extended by WEFO; targeted spend for School Improvement – directed by Chief Education Officer).
- The finance team have successfully worked with Managers and Schools to secure “new” funding through a bid process with Welsh Government [e.g. School Business Managers Pilot; Community Focus School Business Managers Pilot; Reducing Infant Class Size Grant; School Based Supply Cluster Pilot].

The Council’s Self Evaluation concludes and evidences the following as the main priorities for improvement:

- P1 Improve outcomes at end of Key Stage 4 and 5. Identify any dips in performance at Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 and consider strategies for improvement.
- P2 Await confirmation of outcomes measures for Key Stage 4 and 5 by Welsh Government. Consider alternative strategies to effectively scrutinise performance data in light of changes to performance reporting measures. Data to be based on:
- National categorisation;
  - Progress of schools causing concern;
  - Estyn inspection outcomes and progress of schools;
  - School engagement in the curriculum reform progress;

- Implement guidance from WG regarding a national 'score card'.
- P3 Improve the performance of boys and pupils identified as e-FSM across all phases of education. Work alongside school improvement partners to implement a series of measures to increase accountability for all stakeholders.
- P4 Refine current procedures to monitor and track 'risk' pupils to ensure that all categories of vulnerability are taken into account. Work alongside school improvement partners to monitor, challenge and support schools in order to raise attainment for these students.
- P5 Ensure target setting is focused on aspiration for all learners rather than high takes accountability.
- P6 Build on the recent increase in attendance data to achieve improvements over time. Continue to build capacity in schools in order to effectively raise levels of attendance.
- P7 Reduce the number of exclusions across secondary schools in line with regional and national data. Support schools in sharing best practice across the SEWC region.
- P8 Continue to develop methods for evaluating the impact education services have on wellbeing and attitudes to learning. Modify existing strategies based on findings.
- P9 Work alongside regional and national partners to further improve the quality of education for pupils identified as EOTAS (Education other than at school).
- P10 Improve identification and outcomes for less able students through the successful implementation of the Additional Learning Needs Reform Act.
- P11 Reduce the number of secondary schools requiring the highest levels of support (amber and red).
- P12 Reduce the number of secondary schools identified as 'Estyn Review' following statutory inspection.
- P13 Work alongside the school improvement service to effectively implement the 'Successful Futures' curriculum.
- P14 Continue to sharpen and improve self-evaluation processes through an ethos of 'collective accountability'. Engage with the national self-evaluation toolkit currently being developed by Estyn, OECD and practitioners. Use the toolkit to inform the Local Authority self-evaluation process.

- P15 Verify the very good practice across the Youth Service through participation in the Quality Mark initiative. Continue to evaluate the effectiveness of the Youth Service and make adjustments to provision where appropriate.
- P16 Monitor and evaluate the impact of the 21st Century Schools programme and ensuring lessons learnt from Band A are embedded into the Band B delivery.
- P17 Continue to embed the newly revised leadership structure to maximise attainment and achievement across all aspects of the directorate.
- P18 Continue to promote regional partnerships to ensure consistency and promote best practice.
- P19 Improve financial analysis to enhance how the Directorate considers value for money, thus ensuring that managers are more fully informed when considering the allocation of reducing resources.

#### EAS Professional Advice and Outcome of Summit Meetings

During the summer of 2018, the latest performance of all of Caerphilly's statutory school age learners was received by the Local Authority and the Education Achievement Service (EAS).

Performance is broken down across a number of key stages:

- Foundation Phase – Pupils Aged 3-7 (via teacher assessment)
- Key Stage 2 – Pupils Aged 7-11 (via teacher assessment)
- Key Stage 3 – Pupils Aged 12-14 (via teacher assessment)
- Key Stage 4 – Pupils Aged 14-16 (via examination)
- Key Stage 5 – Pupils Aged 16-18 (via examination)

Following the receipt of the results the Education Achievement Service issued professional advice to each Local Authority. The professional advice provided a detailed breakdown of the current year and historic attainment, attendance and exclusion data for each secondary school as well as some initial lines of enquiry.

In accordance with the regionally agreed Summit protocol, senior staff from Caerphilly's Education Service and the Education Achievement Service carried out a comprehensive diagnosis of the results to agree a position and the initial lines of enquiry for discussion at the forthcoming Summit meetings.

The Summit meetings followed a consistent format with every secondary school head, in some cases accompanied by the Chair of Governors and other senior school leadership accounted for their school performance and shared their emerging plans to improve performance in future years.

Throughout the meetings a number of consistent themes began to emerge and, where schools had managed to buck broader trends, some innovative local approaches were identified which may have broader benefit if shared more widely.

The key themes that emerged from the Summit discussions are set out below:

### **Leadership**

All leaders demonstrated a commitment to improving the outcomes of all pupils.

Leaders need to be able to access, and fully engage in, high quality support and development opportunities.

Leaders need to ensure that self-evaluation systems are effective, embedded and are increasingly sharpened so that strengths and areas for improvement can be crystalised. These processes should permeate through all levels throughout the school.

Leaders need to be able to analyse and account for the school's performance. They should have clear priorities and identify appropriate strategies to drive improvement. This responsibility should be shared at all levels. These priorities should be adopted by primary schools within the cluster wherever appropriate.

The value of target setting and the checking of progress was questioned. Tracking systems are variable and do not always extend throughout the whole school. In the best practice, there are strong links to KS2 systems.

The use of key indicators benchmarking and early entry, sometimes appears to drive behaviours which are not always conducive to an appropriate pathway for all learners.

The engagement of Governing Bodies is variable and not all are meaningfully involved in relevant processes such as self-evaluation. Governor training and development is also an area for improvement overall.

## **Outcomes**

There remains a significant number of pupils who don't achieve the level 2 inclusive measure because of one subject – usually English, Welsh or Maths. This 'readacross' challenge is increased in the Capped 9 measure.

Levels of literacy are a concern for most schools and require a greater focus in Year 7, 8 and 9. Some good work is taking place with primary schools but is in early stages of development.

Performance of vulnerable groups, especially boys and those learners eligible for free school meals, is a concern and sometimes strategies for improvement appear limited.

Exclusion rates are exceptionally high in some schools in comparison with similar schools.

Attendance has improved in the majority of schools but remains a challenge.

## **Provision**

Not all have taken opportunities to visit and learn from the best practice within and beyond the region.

The focus on pedagogy needs to be sharpened and increased.

Levels of engagement with the Excellence in Teaching and Learning Framework (ETLF) and new curriculum professional learning remains variable.

## **The Strategic Action Plan**

A Strategic Action Plan is under development in order to address the issues that have been raised within :

EAS Professional advice  
Summit meetings with all headteachers  
LA Self Evaluation.

The headteachers, LA and EAS will work together to ensure that actions taken are effective and timely.

The plan will be monitored and reviewed as appropriate through the EAB. Update reports will be available to CMT, PDM and Scrutiny